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THE
B I R T H R I G H T.

BY EMILIE CARLÉN,
AUTHOR OF "THE ROSE OF TISTELON."

FROM THE ORIGINAL,
BY THE TRANSLATOR OF "ST ROCHE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.
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THE BIRTHRIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

THE four or five following days were occupied by pic-nics and water parties, during which the Chamberlain found opportunity to pay more and more marked attention to Virginie, while the General perceived with secret vexation that Hedda was losing her influence, and he the prospect of so desirable a son-in-law.

One morning, when the father and daughter were alone together, without the presence of any strangers to impose a restraint upon their communications, the General could not avoid expressing his disapproval of Hedda's conduct with some degree of irritation.

"Oh, papa," said she, laying her hand upon her father's with a look of touching entreaty: "pray do not scold me."

"Oh, of course, one must not even express an opinion. But now you have the proud distinction for a young lady, of looking on while another girl carries off your admirer."

"Oh, papa, what does it signify. I am only sixteen and a half; let me stay at home with you, I am too young to marry."

"You will be old enough before you have another opportunity of making so good a match."

"Pray do not find fault with me any more, papa; I feel so sad to-day:" and Hedda bowed her head upon her bosom as a bird that has been shot through the wing, hides its head upon the wound.

There was something so touching in her tone as she uttered these last words, that it quite disarmed the General.

"And why should you be sad, my child? You have so much pleasure in store for to-day. All our neighbours are coming to dinner; and the young people are to dance in the evening."

"And yet I do not feel gay."

Poor little Hedda! her bed of hawthorn was more full of thorns than ever. Her heart was very sorrowful now that she became daily

more and more convinced that she must never hope to see the spray thrive and grow green again. Hot and bitter were the tears she shed—life was so long to look forward to, so blank and joyless. Thus it is when the heart is as yet unused to bear its burden and conceal its struggles. Afterwards, when it has acquired the dearly purchased power of self-control, its feelings are no longer exposed to the sight as well as to the ungenial touch of others. In this protecting mantle fold is laid over fold, in each of which lies concealed a written page to be hereafter bound up in the folios of experience, while within the inmost one is preserved the bright spring-tide dream of youth: the faded roses whose relics are still preserved amidst the images of memory.

Hedda, however, was far from having reached this point. She had not yet attained to the first fold, though day by day she laboured to fold it down.

On the evening of the same day she made her escape from the noisy gaiety of the ball-room, and fled to the darkest recesses of the garden: something more than usual had happened to grieve her, and flinging herself down on a mossy bank, she wept without restraint, as youth can weep at sixteen.

What was the cause of this bitter sorrow?

Richard had left her in the midst of a waltz, and this is how it came to pass :—

In order to have a waltz with Richard, Isabel was obliged to promise a second one to the Chamberlain. She was already tired, and felt that she was committing an imprudence. Accordingly, no sooner had she taken one turn than she was compelled to stop ; and Richard, who saw her support herself for an instant against the door-post, forgot Hedda—the ball—in short, everything but her. Letting go his partner, he hastened towards her ; she instantly took his arm and he conducted her to a sofa in an adjoining room.

“Leave me, leave me this instant, Richard !” she exclaimed ; but the Colonel, Baroness Ebba, Virginie, and Miss Gunilla, had already followed her, and were all plying her with questions and recommendations.


By an effort, of which the only perceptible evidence was to be seen in her eye and in the swelling of the veins of her forehead, she succeeded in remaining seated, cold, calm, almost motionless. “What need of all this fuss about me ? It is really nothing—I cannot stand waltzing, that is all. Pray do not be at all uneasy on my account—all I want is to be left alone for a little while.”

It was only after some resistance, and when her impatience became manifest, that her wish was

granted. "Bring me my shawl," whispered she to Virginie, who returned with it in an instant, but in vain entreated permission to remain. "My dear," said Isabel, with an attempt to smile, "I would not for the world deprive the Chamberlain of the best compensation he can have for the loss of his partner—go! go!" There was something almost of command in the tone of these last words, and Virginie went.

No sooner was Isabel alone, and with the door shut and bolted, than she threw off the mask. She almost tore asunder the fastenings of her gown, loosened every string, and wrapping herself in her shawl, flung herself upon the sofa, burying her head deep in the cushions. If any one ever possessed self-control, it was Isabel, as her twisted and bitten handkerchief could testify; and not a sound was heard from within, though she could distinctly hear her father saying to Baroness Ebba: "It is nothing but a little faintness, occasioned probably by the heat of the room. I fancy she is gone to sleep."

After the lapse of an hour, which had appeared almost an eternity, Isabel raised her head from the cushions, stood up, and approached the mirror. Her countenance was much altered, but this did not alarm her. There was sorrow and humiliation but no horror, in the faint smile with which she contemplated her own image. Taking a small



tortoise-shell comb from her head, she smoothed her hair and arranged her curls. Then, after bathing her forehead and cheeks with a few drops of eau-de-cologne which Virginie had left her, she fastened her gown very loosely, and draped herself in her shawl. This last operation took a considerable time, for it is not to be denied that there lay a certain degree of coquetry in the disposition of every fold. When her toilette was ended, and her features had resumed their usual placidity, she approached the door of the saloon: then turned to cast one final glance of enquiry at the mirror. The reply it gave was satisfactory. Her figure was erect, her forehead smooth, her eye calm and clear. Scarcely a shadow remained to give token of her transitory indisposition.

As she entered the saloon, all crowded around her, but Richard she did not see. Questions and hopes poured in upon her, and were all replied to with the readiest courtesy. She was now quite well, and did not know whether it were the heat, the dancing, or a glass of cold water, which had caused her momentary indisposition—it might be the combination of the three—and therefore she would not venture to dance again that evening. Isabel well knew that she had danced for the last time. The exertion, as well as the constraint of appearing in full dress, had


been almost intolerably painful to her, and during the past hour she had vowed to herself not to increase her sufferings by that which might so well be avoided.

But where was Richard? Where was the little lady?

Hedda lay sobbing on the grassy bank, whither she had fled, not on Richard leaving her, but on his returning from his attendance on Isabel without approaching her to offer a word of apology. Thus cruelly slighted, the poor oppressed little heart could not restrain its longing to vent its bitterness in tears, and, in her ball-dress as she was, she made her escape, and hastened with rapid steps down the garden.

Richard did not miss her. He had not one thought for her. But in his anxiety the remarks and conversation of the company were irksome to him, and a few minutes after he followed her footsteps.


His thoughts, however, were all in the room from which he had been dismissed. He paced up and down with folded arms, while cold drops of anguish stood upon his brow. He went on, in his abstraction not perceiving the increasing coldness of the air till he stood on the brink of the lake, and found himself exposed to a keen north wind. Here he flung himself down upon the



grass. It seemed a relief to him to feel the chill night-dews, to inhale the cold breath of the lake.

There are many days in our lives which are merely a repetition of those which have preceded them. Their numbers go on increasing, and before a single change has occurred to vary their monotony, a year has passed away—a new one has begun; and as this new one flings its portals wide, every day that passes over its threshold is as a day of creation—one that seems to contain a whole lifetime within itself. Thus it was with Richard. Up to his twentieth year his life had been a bright and cheerful vision. Now, in his one-and-twentieth, it bestowed upon him all that it can bestow,—robbed him of all that it can take away. It took from him his heart, love, peace, and repose, and gave him in their place, hope, jealousy, anxiety, passion, and agony.

He could no longer endure his present suspense, and hastily retraced his steps through the silent garden paths. But on a sudden he paused with a start. Whose was the form that met his eye? What were the sounds that struck upon his ear? He bent over the mossy bank, and Hedda raised her head, the tears still streaming down her cheeks. She recognised Richard, uttered a low cry, and covering her face with her hands, she turned and fled.



For a moment Richard stood undecided what to do; but her steps were not directed towards the house. It was most probable that she had intended to return thither, but in her bewilderment had not perceived which way she went, and thus turned her course towards the lake. It was not long, however, before Richard's hand was laid upon hers.

"Mademoiselle Hedda, for heaven's sake, suffer me to conduct you home."

"I am going home. Leave me!" cried she, wildly.

"No, you are mistaken. Look, there is the lake; this is not the way home!"

"No matter; leave me, I entreat you. Thus much Lieutenant Richard may surely do for me, —when I request it of him."

"Mademoiselle Hedda,"—he drew her arm within his own—"I would do a great deal, a very great deal, for you. But now listen to me. Let us turn back; and permit me to entreat your pardon for the offence I unintentionally committed against you when I But you will not listen to me."

"Oh, yes, I hear. There was no apology required,—you could not in your anxiety recollect all the trifles which custom has rendered imperative."

"No, indeed, it was impossible! How kind you are thus to find excuses for me. My anxiety now is lest you should catch cold!"

"That is of no consequence. How is she now?"

"I do not know; I have been out here for some time!"

"You must, then, be very impatient to learn. Pray have the kindness to go forward; I will follow you immediately."

"No, that I will not do. I cannot obey you in this."

"And what will you now think of me?" exclaimed she, impatiently withdrawing her arm from his. "I entreat you to tell no one that you have found me thus. Promise me not to speak of it to Isabel."

"Dearest Mademoiselle Hedda, I think that your pure and guileless feelings have been misdirected into a channel from which they will soon revert into one more prosperous. I trust to see your warm heart become happy in this life, and I swear by Him who knows how fervent are my prayers for your welfare, how firm is my confidence in your strength of mind, that this interview shall for ever remain a secret between us two!"

"Then let me precede you," whispered she, almost inaudibly; "I shall be able to reach my

own room by the back stairs, and should any one ask any questions I shall count upon your promise. You think no evil of me then?"

"I think you the purest and most innocent creature upon the face of God's earth!" He pressed her hand hurriedly, and she sped away.

About half-an-hour after Isabel's re-appearance, Richard, who had lingered awhile in his own room, re-entered the saloon. How agreeably was he surprised to perceive his cousin engaged in an animated conversation with several of the party. He drew near and took up his post behind her chair; she smiled, and told him she had been back this half-hour; but it was not until some time after that he was quite satisfied; an old gentleman left his seat beside her, which was immediately occupied by Richard, and bending down as if to arrange the trimming of her gown, she whispered to him, "Do not be uneasy, dear Richard, it was really nothing of any consequence. But I ought not to have waltzed."

"I wish we were at home again; here you are obliged to subject yourself to too much constraint."

Richard did not suspect that it was on his account, and not on that of the company, that Isabel imposed so much constraint upon herself, and that she had appeared in full dress this day in order that he might believe her to be better than she really was. She made no reply therefore, but

as the dancers now stood up for a quadrille, they again found an opportunity of exchanging a few words in private.

"Where have you been, Richard? when you came in you looked paler, and more miserable than you did when I went out."

"Very likely; but how can I look otherwise in moments of such misery?"

"You must show more fortitude, Richard."

"That I might do, if I could look the evil in the face. Will you never be quite open with me?"

"It gives me the greatest pain to speak upon this subject; however, I will not altogether refuse your request—at some future time, perhaps."

A deep sigh burst from Richard's bosom. When and how was he to obtain this confidence?

"Where is Hedda?" asked Isabel, looking round.

"Oh!" cried Virginie, who was passing by them at that moment, "Hedda has left the ball-room and has gone to bed. I shall run up and see how she is."

"I agree with you, Richard, in wishing we were at home again, and if I am able to persuade papa, we leave this place to-morrow, or after to-morrow at the latest."

"But if you cannot persuade him (which I very much doubt, for my uncle enjoys being here,) then, you must excuse me—but I must leave Mørkedal."

Isabel raised her eyes to his with a peculiar expression. "Could you really do so, Richard?"

"I *must* do so."

"Indeed! then something must have happened! Richard ——!"

"Isabel!" he uttered only this one word, but it expressed so great a degree of displeasure, that it more than sufficed her.

"We shall all go together," said she, quickly.

The following morning the Colonel was in his slippers and dressing-gown, preparing for the business of the toilet, when a knock was heard at his door, followed by Isabel's voice, saying, "May I come in, papa?"

"Dear me! what is the matter?" said the Colonel, opening the door; "Are you up already, Isabel? I am as you see, my dear, not altogether in a state to receive a visit from a lady."

"There is surely no need of so much ceremony between a father and daughter," said Isabel, seating herself in a corner of the sofa.

"Some degree of license may, indeed, be granted to such near relationship, but it is a mark of high breeding never to suffer it to overstep the limits within which it ought to be restricted."

"Have you settled anything about our return home, papa?" asked Isabel, without further preamble.

"Our return home ? the week for which we proposed ourselves is not yet over ; so it will then be time enough to think of that. I should have thought that you, who are so *fêtée*, would have been the last person to be impatient for it."

"You know, papa, that I care but little for such things. I came here to tell you what I neither would nor ought to say to any one else, which is, that my attack yesterday was of a very serious nature, and that I wish to return home this very day."

"To-day !—that is quite impossible!"

"To-morrow, then?"

"That would be still less feasible. You know that we are to dine at Baron P——'s, and we cannot be so uncivil as to throw over our engagement."

"Not if I am ill?"

"But, my dear, I really cannot see that you are ill at all. Besides, this fancy of yours shows very little concern for your relations. You must perceive that our remaining here may prove great advantage to Virginie. The attentions of the Chamberlain are very marked, and the idea that Virginie might possibly be so fortunate is quite affecting to me. If it should really come to pass that he should propose to the poorest girl in the whole province, of course it could only be on account of her connexion ; and, therefore, I consider

it my imperative duty, not, by my indifference, to risk the loss of a piece of good fortune which would be really astonishing, and which, even you, my dear, would not have reason to despise."

Isabel listened with a peculiar expression of countenance to her father's eloquent oration. "But, papa," exclaimed she, at length, "how fond you are of matrimonial speculations. You have not yet the least idea whether Virginie takes even half so much interest in the matter."

"Isabel," replied her father, concealing his irritation by a smile, "Virginie has neither beauty nor fortune, but neither has she any caprices, which is much to be commended. She knows that it is not becoming in a young lady of good manners to give any direct encouragement to an admirer, from which she would also be restrained by her natural modesty. It, therefore, behoves us all the more not to stand in the way of her destiny. As yet, I have not given either her mother or Richard any hint of my observations, for I do not wish to buoy them up with hopes which may not be realized. I am, however, of opinion that it would be very becoming in Richard to show the Chamberlain a little more attention."

"I hope Richard would never stoop to flatter any one in order to promote his sister's marriage. So attractive and amiable a girl as Virginie will

not fail to find a husband, without the interference of other people."

"Yes, some poor lieutenant, may be; but, perhaps, such a marriage would meet with more of your approval."

By the tone in which the Colonel spoke these words Isabel plainly perceived that a personal allusion was intended.

"A poor lieutenant," replied she, quietly, "might prove as desirable a match as a rich chamberlain, supposing him to have the advantage over the latter, of being beloved."

"Indeed! as desirable a match! after such an expression of opinion I should not be surprised were I some day to see that come to pass of which every one already speaks."

"If you would have the kindness, papa, to be more explicit, it would be easier for me to reply to this insinuation."

"Very well then, if you wish it, I will inform you that every body is astonished to perceive what I have hitherto, from delicacy, forbore to comment upon, namely, the marked distinction and even encouragement which you bestow upon Richard. I hope however, that it has not yet occurred to any one to suppose that you can intend to *marry* your father's agent."

"As yet my cousin does not hold that office;

and supposing he were to propose to me, and that a marriage between us were in contemplation, he might purchase a property of his own."

"Yes, *if*," said the Colonel, in what he intended to be a jesting tone. "But my dear, we should not speak lightly on such delicate subjects. I merely turned the conversation into this channel in order to call your attention to the fact that your evident partiality for Richard might easily excite hopes in the poor boy's heart. I know it is to you a mere matter of amusement, but it is not so to him; I fear he is already seriously attached. But this is not all; should you continue the same course of conduct, the world will undoubtedly believe that you contemplate making this *més-alliance*, of which even the appearance should be avoided."

There was much truth in what the Colonel had said concerning Richard, and it touched Isabel home. She felt now, as she had often done before, that she was doing wrong in avoiding a direct explanation with him, as to the only footing on which they could possibly stand towards each other. The Colonel, who saw her silent and thoughtful, was persuaded that his words had made an impression upon her in a totally different sense, and therefore proceeded with a considerable degree of self-satisfaction: "Yes, my dear, the world would not fail to say how very

strange it was, that the rich, admired, and accomplished Mademoiselle Von X—— should have chosen to marry her poor, penniless cousin, and moreover that —— ”

“ Dear papa,” interrupted Isabel, “ never mind the world. For my part I do not care in the least whether it says that I am going to marry Richard or not—he is a man of such irreproachable character that there would be nothing to be said on the subject.”

The Colonel was somewhat puzzled in what tone to resume the conversation ; he therefore placed himself in front of Isabel in an attitude of the most imposing dignity, and fastened upon her a look which he believed to be irresistible.

“ How strange you are, papa,” said Isabel smiling, “ how should it be a *mésalliance* if I were to marry your favourite ?”

“ My favourite !” repeated the Colonel, “ but one may have different sorts of favourites. Surely Richard has not had the presumption to propose to you ?”

“ He has not ; but I will candidly acknowledge that I expect that he will do so.”

“ Indeed ! very fine indeed ! very delightful ! you expect that he will propose, and you of course will accept him ?”

“ Be assured, papa,” replied Isabel very seriously, that were there no other reasons against such a

marriage than Richard's poverty and want of rank, these would not influence my choice; for the one deficiency would be remedied by his marriage with me, and the latter by time; but there *are* other reasons against it. I value and esteem Richard more than any man I have ever known; but for reasons which must remain concealed even from him, I shall never be his wife."

"It would then be a great want of delicacy on my part to inquire into these reasons," resumed the Colonel with a beaming countenance. "Isabel, I have always had great confidence in your judgment, and I own that, highly as I appreciate Richard, I rejoice to see that I have not been deceived in you. There is still something however of which it would give me great satisfaction to be informed, and that is your motive in suffering him to appear as your acknowledged admirer?"

This, however, was an explanation which Isabel was by no means inclined to afford. She could not acknowledge what a delight it was to her to be with him only on that footing of confidential intercourse, which, forming a medium between distant admiration and the intimacy of a positive engagement, induces other men to keep aloof, and causes every one to surmise that it will end in a marriage.

The Colonel, meanwhile, was waiting for an answer, and Isabel, after a few moments' reflection,

said, "if this be really the case it is not the result of any preconceived plan. It often happens that when relations live together, a great degree of intimacy arises between them imperceptibly to themselves, which ought not to call forth the remarks of others. And you, papa, who have so fine a tact in such matters, must surely perceive that any change in my manner towards him would only serve to indicate that there really had been some question of an engagement between us."

"Yes, Isabel, there you are quite right; and as you have shown so much confidence in my tact, as to lay the matter clearly before me, I will find means to place it in its proper light. But what is to become of Richard? It would be but fair that he should know what he has to count upon, and the sooner the better: I am afraid he is the victim of a very dangerous illusion."

Isabel coloured deeply as the thought crossed her mind that even her father, the most selfish of mortals, seemed to have more consideration for Richard's welfare than herself. This could scarcely be the case in reality; but even the strongest heart has its weaknesses. Isabel was determined to make the greatest possible sacrifice to Richard's future peace, but she desired to prolong as much as possible the interval which separated her from the first step towards its accomplishment. "So long," resumed she, "as Richard says nothing

which can justify an explanation, it is of course impossible for me to expound my sentiments to him; but whenever he does so, you may be sure, papa, that he shall not remain a moment longer in suspense."

"Very right, dear Isabel. That is all that the most scrupulous delicacy can demand. If, however, you have any regard for my wishes, do not make any scene, and let the affair pass over as quietly as possible. It is always disagreeable to give the world matter for gossip, and I hope it will not be necessary for Richard to leave Tying-sholm on that account."

Isabel durst not entertain a hope on this subject; and as it was high time to turn the conversation, she reverted to her first question: "Well, then, papa, it is settled that we go away to-day, or to-morrow, at latest? I really must return home."

"But, my dear, think of Virginie's prospects. I really cannot answer it to my conscience to leave them so entirely to fate."

"In that case," suggested Isabel, "why should not you remain here with Virginie? My aunt, I am sure, wishes to return home as much as I do, and Richard can take care of us."

"Indeed, that would not be a bad plan. The only thing is, I do not know whether it would be quite fitting. I should not like the world to say

that I let Virginie remain on account of the Chamberlain."

"There is certainly no calculating on what people might choose to say, and I think my aunt would be the best judge in this matter—but at any rate some of us must go home."

The Colonel felt that his sister-in-law could scarcely agree to leave Virginie there, consequently he gave his consent; and when the courteous objections of the General had been overruled, their departure was fixed upon for the following day. Before this, however, the Colonel had the pleasure of informing Isabel that the Chamberlain had proposed himself to pay a visit at Tyringsholm, a fortnight later, on his way to Stockholm.

"Now, what do you think, Isabel? Upon my honour I do not know how to express my satisfaction. Think of our poor little Virginie making such a match! Is it not fortunate that I came? I have always been anxious about her future prospects, and sincerely congratulate myself on having thus secured them."

It never occurred to the Colonel that the visit to Mörkedal might have had precisely the same results, even without his presence.

Hedda had not appeared since the ball, but she came down to breakfast on the day of the guests' departure, and if the Captain (who had gone three

days before to attend the field exercises) had only been there, he would not have failed to say that "the little lady behaved bravely." If her eyes were not so bright as usual, they gave no evidence of any predilection for mustard; and even when Richard kissed her hand on taking leave of her, she did not in any degree give way to her feelings. She was anxious to secure that which alone he had to give her—his esteem; and she read in his countenance that she had succeeded.

When all the rest of the party went down into the court to see the travellers into their carriage, Hedda remained alone in the saloon. She was very pale, and trembled in every limb.

"Oh! Richard, I have left my bag!" cried Baroness Ebba.

Richard hastened back, and perceived Hedda leaning for support against a pillar.

"Dearest Mademoiselle Hedda!" he exclaimed. She waved her hand to him in token of farewell.

He respected her distress, and did not approach her; but her image, as she then appeared to him, remained engraven on his heart, even after the storms of years had smoothed the mountainous waves over which our barks must float in the voyage of life.

CHAPTER II.

It was Saturday evening. The neat church-yard and church of Tyringsholm smiled in the evening sun, which shed its beams upon the graves; and the birds mingled their evening hymn with the dying tones of the organ. The white pigeons were already assembled upon the roof waiting for their food.

The key turned in the lock of the church door, and the old organist appeared upon the threshold, followed by Mary, whose sweet countenance bore an expression of almost inspired devotion. She seated herself amidst her favourites, and began dispensing to them her usual bounty.

"I think you are almost too old for such an amusement," said old Alsing, in a tone of less kindness than he was in the habit of using to his daughter: "it would be better if you were of some use to your mother at home."

"My mother has given me leave to go to the Assessor's. I want to speak to Anna about her wedding-gown which she begged I would help her to make," replied Mary, bending down her head to hide her blushes.

"Yes," resumed Alsing, "the Assessor's Anna has got a husband in all honour and credit! she does not strive to fly higher than her wings will carry her. What will become of you is another question, as you considered yourself too good for so respectable a young man as the Commissary."

"Oh, father, I dare say I shall do very well."

"Yes, you are ready enough, I see, with your hopes and your fancies; but you will probably get nothing better, even if worse does not come of them. But this I tell you, Mary—if he should begin his walks again, for I see him now and then loitering about near my house—if he should, mind what I say, I shall send you away. I have not yet exhausted all my resources."

Mary was silent, and played with her apron; and her father, who saw that his words had not failed of their effect, desired her in a somewhat more gentle tone to make haste to the Assessor's.

The church and church-yard were in a rather high situation, from which the ground fell to the Sacristan's cottage, and the old man had scarcely got half way down the hill, before some one sprang so suddenly over the opposite wall that

both Mary and the doves took flight, they circling and fluttering, to the roof of the church, and she to its eastern side.

It seemed, however, as if Mary's flight was only feigned, for she was there easily overtaken by her pursuer, who was no other than Klas Malchus.

"How sweet are these dearly-purchased hours," said he, as clasping his arm around her, he seated himself beside her on the soft turf, "and how I have longed for you, Mary! tell me if you have counted the moments with half the impatience that I have."

"With much more," replied Mary, hiding her blushing face, "I am often scolded for getting on so slowly at my loom; and it is all because I lose so much time in counting the hours and thinking about you. I often wish it were Saturday more than once a week.

"And, Mary, when every day is like Saturday—when you are my own wife, will you love me as much then?"

"Oh!" said Mary, quickly, pressing her hand over her eyes, "I have but one fear, and that I cannot shake off."

"A fear! and what is that, Mary?"

"That I shall never be worthy of such great happiness as you will confer upon me."

"Would to God that it were attained; but you are well worthy of far more than this."

"But when I think about it seriously, as I often do, I perceive how presumptuous it is of me, the simple and ignorant daughter of a sacristan, to aspire to be—I will not say a Baroness, though it sounds so well—but the wife of a rich Baron. Think, if there should ever come a day when you were to think so too, when you should despise me, and be ashamed of ever having loved me, what would then become of poor Mary? Her presumption would, indeed, be punished, and she would wish that she were still sitting in the church-yard amongst her pigeons, and that she had never attempted to soar higher than her wings would bear her; but she strove to fly with your wings, and that was all too bold of her."

"No, Mary; do not think so," said Klas, with a look that spoke the feeling of his heart. "Trust to my pinions, they shall bear you to my eyrie. But, Mary, do you really think it sounds so well to be called a Baroness? You are a little vain, then, I perceive!"

Mary coloured deeply. "I dare say it is very wrong," said she, "but I do sometimes think so: above all——"

"Well, above all——?" repeated Klas, smiling.

"I should like to be called 'your Ladyship.'"

"Heaven forgive me, Mary, but I think you are just like all other women! But now, if I were to determine positively that you should never

be called a Baroness or your Ladyship, but only plain Mrs. E—brand, what would you think then?"

"I should think in that case, as in every other," replied Mary, humbly, "that all that you do is right; and if you did not choose me to be called by any title, you may be assured that it would be very disagreeable to me to hear myself thus addressed."

There was such an expression of sincerity on Mary's countenance that Klas could not for a moment suspect her of anything more than a little childish vanity, to which he felt she was fully welcome so long as she was ready to own it frankly, and to submit thus implicitly to his will and pleasure.

"Well, well," said he, caressingly, "you shall be called 'your Ladyship,' but upon condition that your vanity extends no further!"

"Oh yes, but it will," replied Mary, "for my greatest source of vanity and pride too will be to be called your wife. The best and most delightful of all will be when you address me by that name."

He clasped her more closely to him, "Yes, you shall be my own beloved wife! I often fancy you coming into my room, arranging everything so nicely with that quiet, noiseless step that I like so much. You will look at me, and see whether I want anything, and if I look up and smile upon

you, you will bend down over me and lay your head upon my shoulder, as you are doing now ; but if I do not look up, you will know that I am occupied with thoughts that must not be interrupted ; and you will then vanish like a good genius that leaves behind it a consciousness of peace, and I shall know that you are at hand, which will be to me the sweetest of enjoyments.

“How kind you are to tell me all this ; but I really think I should have done it without your telling me—and it is very good of you to talk to me so much to-day. I know you are just as fond of me when you are silent, but I do love to hear your voice.”

“In that case I would willingly talk more to you, my sweet Mary, but I must remind you that my greatest enjoyment consists in silence ! so now be quiet, little prattler, and lay your head upon my shoulder—so, that is right.”

“Plague take it !” cried old Alsing, turning about his newspaper ; “I really think I have left my spectacles in the church !” and with these words, he took his hat and stick from their corner, and the key of the church from its nail, and off he went.

No one will suppose that Baron Klas and Mary were likely to hear footsteps on the other side of the church ; and neither did they hear the church-door opened, and steps ascending to the organ loft.

"There you are!" said old Alsing to his spectacles, as he lifted them from the window seat; but as he again raised his head, he happened to look out of the window, and beheld a sight which sent the blood rushing to the old man's cheeks, for there was his pure and modest Mary seated on the grass by the Baron's side, while his arm was clasped round her waist, and she offered no resistance to the kiss which he imprinted on her brow; her countenance, moreover, was one of perfect happiness, not that of a penitent Magdalen, as in her father's opinion it ought to have been.

"So that is the way we spend our time!" thought Alsing, as he hurriedly strode down the stairs. "It was Providence itself that made me leave my spectacles behind, in order to put me upon her track; but wait a bit, my fine madam, and I will pay you off!" and before Mary had any idea that she was betrayed,—while her lover's arm was yet around her, her father's hand was roughly twisted in her hair.

"Get up, you shameless hussy! you smooth-tongued saint!" cried the old man, in a voice trembling with passion. "Is this the way you honour your father's house and the house of God? but we shall see if I cannot cure you of your love fancies!"

"Are you beside yourself?" exclaimed Klas Malchus, now starting to his feet and seeing how

the furious old man had seized his daughter by her beautiful hair. "Hold, I say! Let Mary go this moment!"

"Go home, sir, go home, and do not interfere in my business; but you may be sure that Mary shall be sent to a place where neither sun nor moon shall shine upon her. Shame upon you! is it not a crying sin to ensnare an inexperienced girl, the daughter of an honourable man? But do not suppose that I will connive at such doings, I will inform the Colonel of everything; and if you ever cross my threshold again, I——"

"Very well, that will do; now listen to me," said Klas quietly, as he disengaged Mary's rich tresses from her father's gripe, "can you suppose, Father Alsing, that Mary is less safely guarded in my arms than in your own cottage, when I solemnly declare to you that Mary is my affianced bride, and shall become my wife, so soon as I have attained my majority; but as till then I do not wish to create dissensions in my family, we have agreed to be silent until the autumn. Will this declaration satisfy you, and will you suffer me to see Mary now and then, without any further difficulty?"

"No, that I will not, upon my soul!" replied old Alsing, who regarded the whole affair with considerable suspicion. "That you should entertain the thought of marrying my daughter is a

great honour, and one for which I humbly thank you; but, you see, people cannot always answer for themselves, and there is no saying what may happen between now and next autumn. No, no, I will have no play-acting; everything must be open and above-board; and, sir, either you shall at once acknowledge Mary as your bride, or I will find a place for her where it will not be so easy for you to meet her alone. For you see, sir, though I am a poor man, I have as good a right as any one to watch over the honour of my child—if it be not already too late!”

Mary burst into tears.

“Do not weep, dearest,” entreated Klas, “although in his anger your father uses such harsh expressions, yet he surely cannot doubt your purity. And Alsing, since you undoubtedly have a right to demand it, and will not be satisfied with less, I promise you to speak to my father as soon as ever he returns home. You must yourself perceive that it will be no easy matter to obtain his consent and my mother’s, but I shall hope to gain it last. If, however, I should not be so fortunate, Mary shall be my wife, nevertheless. And now, Father Alsing, give us your blessing with a willing heart.”

“But, good Heavens!” cried old Alsing, gazing with looks of astonishment first at one and then at the other, “Is it possible, sir, that you seriously

intend to make Mary your wife? So help me God, I thought it was all a pretence."

"And could you then really believe me to be such a villain that I should seek to ruin Mary's peace and happiness? No, I love her with my whole heart. The qualities she possesses are those which I most desire in my wife, and which I should perhaps be unable to find in a woman of my own station; and you may depend upon it that she, and no other, shall be my bride."

The organist clasped his hands with mingled emotions of gratitude, pride, and joy. "I am a poor man," said he, "but the Lord has wrought great things in me, and with his blessing I trust that Mary has been brought up in a manner that will give you, sir, no cause to repent your condescension. I give you the most precious thing that I possess!" and with these words the old man took Mary's hand and gave it to the Baron, who clasped it in his own, while he extended the other to the happy father.

Nothing could exceed the happiness of Mary. "Oh," said she with a beseeching glance at her father: "if we could but keep our secret until the autumn."

"My child, Heaven knows that I believe the Baron's word as implicitly as I would the Bible; but for the sake of the kindness I have always received from the Baroness, and the confidence

she has reposed in me, I cannot consent to be as it were in the plot against her. I know that this marriage will be a severe blow and a great sorrow to her and to the Colonel, and I could not look them in the face with the consciousness of being the accomplice of a proceeding that would distress them so much. No; I wish to goodness that I had known nothing about it, for now my conscience will not suffer me to be silent; and think, if my wife were to find it out, and it were to reach their ears in a round-about way, that would be much worse."

"That is true," said Klas Malchus, "but try to keep the secret at least for a few days, and as soon as my father comes home I will speak to my parents."

Old Alsing bowed, well pleased. "No one, not even my wife, shall know anything from me of what has happened," said he; and after shaking hands heartily with the Baron, he was so considerate as to go away.

Klas Malchus and Mary passed another hour together, but their happiness was not now as unruffled as it had been before, for the thoughts of both dwelt upon the arduous path which they must traverse before they could reach their haven of peace and love.

CHAPTER III.

THE first thing which met the eye of Baron Klas, on his return to Tyringsholm, was the Colonel's carriage; the servants were busy carrying the luggage up stairs, and Isabel waved her handkerchief to him from the window of the saloon.

"Is not this an agreeable surprise? we are come back at least three days sooner than you expected us!" exclaimed Richard, descending the steps and grasping Klas warmly by the hand.

Klas drew him aside behind a pillar of the portico. "Will you remain here and face the terrors of the last day?" asked he with ill-concealed agitation, "or are you going home with the ladies?"

"Good gracious, what is the matter? my mother and Virginie are going home directly, and

I meant to go with them; but if I can be of any use to you, I will remain here."

"Yes, do—for this very evening everything must be decided."

"What, dear Klas! would you go to work so rashly without any preparation? You meant to wait till the autumn."

"Yes, so I did. But this evening old Alsing discovered our secret; and I can neither enforce silence upon him, nor, considering his very pardonable suspicions, could I place myself under such an obligation to him as to entreat it; besides, the affair having once been discovered, might reach the ears of my parents in some unfitting way, and I do not choose them to learn it from any one but myself."

"There you are right; but let my uncle sleep in peace to-night. It will be time enough to-morrow."

"No; when I have made up my mind to do a thing, it is better to get it over at once! I am now in the mood to speak to my father; but to-morrow I might find it very difficult."

"Well, do as you think best! But at any rate let my mother and Virginie drink their tea, and be fairly off first."

When Klas Malchus entered the saloon, the Colonel could not help observing with pleasure, that his greetings were accompanied by a bow

much lower and more courteous than usual. This was equally noticed by the rest of the party, but no one suspected the cause of the change.

The Colonel, too full of his news to keep it to himself, took his son to the window. "Only think, Klas Malchus, in a fortnight, or even sooner perhaps, some one is coming here, probably with the intention of proposing for our amiable little Virginie, who has not hitherto attracted the notice of any one; and you must know that this admirer is no ordinary person. He is the Chamberlain Von Brude,—wealthy and a man of real genius, with the most brilliant prospects for the future. And now do not you think our expedition was a fortunate one?"

"Yes, it certainly sounds very well; but is she equally delighted?"

"I do not think she has, as yet, the slightest suspicion of her good fortune—for of course she could never expect such a match."

"Indeed! Do you not think that a young and pretty girl of good family might aspire to marry a Chamberlain?"

"A poor Chamberlain, perhaps; in that there would be nothing very extraordinary; but a rich one, and a man besides of such talents, and so highly connected—one must acknowledge that to be an unequal match."

“Oh, we often hear of more unequal ones!” replied Klas somewhat shortly.

All the efforts of Baroness Eugénie to detain her sister were fruitless. Ebba was anxious to be once more at home, and after half-an-hour’s rest, she drove away with Virginie.

“What a good night’s rest I shall have to-night!” said the Colonel to his wife: “we will have supper early, my dear, and I hope it is nearly time for it—let us see—it is a quarter past nine!”

Richard looked at the Baron as if to make another appeal in favour of his uncle’s night’s rest, but in vain. Klas was labouring under an attack (most unusual for him) of feverish impatience, and would allow his father no peace until his own mind was relieved.

The family had retired into the smaller rooms. Isabel had established herself in a corner of the red sofa. Richard arranged the cushions for her, and then sat down on a chair beside her, while turning over the leaves of a volume of poems. The Colonel was in the yellow boudoir with his wife, to whom he was imparting the same secret which he had already confided to Klas Malchus, and the latter was wandering backwards and forwards between the two rooms. At length he paused upon the threshold, and said abruptly: “With your permission, I wish to speak to you

and my mother in private!" and without waiting for an answer, he closed the door, leaving Richard and Isabel alone together.

"What can this mean, Richard?" said Isabel, "I really believe he has locked us in? What does his portend?"

"A very critical moment for Klas Malchus!" replied Richard, in a low voice; "I almost tremble myself to think that he has reached the turning point of his life. Oh, Isabel, I must soon myself reach the same turning point—it cannot be long deferred.—I do not hear a sound from within; has he not yet spoken?"

"Dear Richard, you amaze me. What is Klas about to do? What are these turning points of which you speak?"

"Do you think there can be more than one in a lifetime? Klas Malchus is at this moment asking what in all probability he will never obtain—the consent of your parents to his marriage with Mary."

Isabel shook her head sadly. "Already!" said she, slowly; "I was so in hopes we should have had an interval of peace. If he would but have waited a little longer!"

"It is not so easy to wait on for ever, and for ever!" said Richard, with a sigh, as he laid his hand upon Isabel's, and bent down his head. They were both silent.

"You wish to speak to us in private?" said the Colonel, as Klas Malchus closed the door; and, as he uttered the words, he felt as if an ice-cold hand had been laid upon his heart. The Baroness turned as pale as death. Heaven knows what they expected to hear; something, perhaps, that bore a resemblance to Richard's extempore dream.

"Yes, Sir; but before proceeding further, permit me to state that whatever circumstances may befall, you may consider yourself the rightful owner of Tyringsholm so long as you live. I purpose seeking out for myself another residence."

"What is the meaning of this?" asked the Colonel. "If you are displeased with anything—if you think Tyringsholm is not large enough to contain us both—you are not the one that must leave your own property."

"But, father, it is my own wish, my sincere wish; and that for no other reason than that Tyringsholm is too large for me. I cannot feel myself at home in these endless suites of apartments. My intention is to purchase a small house and estate for myself, where I can lead a life in all respects suited to my own taste; and therefore I purpose quitting Tyringsholm—quitting it for ever."

The Colonel and his wife exchanged a hasty but silent glance; she bent her head still lower

than before. He rose slowly, and Klas Malchus felt something almost like terror on beholding the expression revealed in his father's eyes.

"I trust, my son, that you have suffered no dream of evil to obtain influence over you?" said the Colonel, in a tone neither loud and commanding, nor proud and self-possessed as his habitually was: there was something in it that sounded almost humble.

"No indeed, father, mine is no evil dream! did I not always say, did I not even write to you that here I should never be otherwise than in the way? You have had many convincing proofs of the impossibility of changing my character; I was never destined by nature to be a shining light, a man of the world; it must have been an error that made me the heir of the *majorat*. Richard ——"

The Baroness started, and uttered a hysterical sound resembling a low cry. The Colonel's cheek blanched, and he turned a look of fearful menace upon his wife, while Klas, unable to account for his mother's agitation, continued, "Richard is, I may say, born to fill that station!"

"Isabel, did you hear that cry?" asked Richard, vehemently grasping her hand and pressing it to his forehead.

"Yes, it was mamma's voice; but for Heaven's sake, Richard, what is the matter with you? your

cheeks are burning, and your eyes flash fire ! Where are you going ? Be still—you would not go in there ?”

“ I knew it, I knew it, Isabel ! Lay your hand upon my forehead ! I love you as my own soul,—more than my life, more than all the wealth of this world ! Yes ; I swear that in this I will not stir ; it would destroy your peace, your repose, and then what good could it do me ? But I must go !—No, no ; hold me fast—thus ! You cannot see, Isabel, what is passing in my soul ; but do not believe that I am mad.”

“ My dearest Richard, how can I help fearing it,” said Isabel anxiously ; “ your words are so unconnected.”

“ I could make them appear connected enough ; but when I look at you—you the star of my life, the life of my heart—Isabel, you can never know how much I love you !”

“ Hark, dear Richard, how loudly they are speaking ! hush, hush ! we will talk of this another time ; only be calm !”


“ Let me hold your hand ;” he drew closer to her ;—“ oh, yes, I am better so ! now they may keep everything.”

Isabel could not conceive what delirious phantasies had taken possession of Richard’s usually cool, clear head, and both her feelings and powers

of attention were at this moment so agitated and divided that she could not hold fast any single idea. She comprehended however that her mother's mysterious cry must be in some manner connected with the words last uttered by Klas Malchus.

This moment was the most painful that the Colonel had experienced in his whole life. His son upon whom and for whose benefit all his ambitious projects were founded, had demolished them all at a single stroke. In the whole world there is nothing more baseless, more delusive than human calculations. Tyringsholm, this ill-fated entailed estate, which even before the birth of his son had cost him so many sleepless nights, was now to be flung away by him as a thing of no value. Instead of maintaining the dignity of the family in their ancestral residence, he was going to bury himself in the obscurity of some unknown and remote seclusion. And this was the son of a father who had sacrificed everything to the pomp and glitter of outward circumstance! But the Colonel had not yet heard the worst.

"Klas Malchus," said he, with now unfeigned emotion, "I hope the day will yet come when you will yourself see the madness of such ideas, and repent of having inflicted the mortification of such a proposal upon a father, whose hopes all centre in you. I even hope to persuade you to abandon



this project. What will the world say when it hears that you have deserted this magnificent residence, to take up your abode in some sorry cottage, like a mere farmer?"

"The world is welcome to say what it likes; it is of infinitely greater consequence to me to know what you and my mother will say when I tell you that I do not wish to take up my abode alone in my new dwelling; I purpose taking with me a companion who would be as little suited to Tyringsholm as myself."

The Colonel could scarcely breathe.

"Better and better," exclaimed he, with forced and unnatural coldness. "Will you have the kindness to inform us of the name of the lady whom you introduce thus incidentally. I hope she is one who need not be ashamed to appear by the side of the ancestresses of the family, whose portraits prove them to have belonged to that class from which alone I can call my daughter-in-law welcome."

"If, sir, you should ever have the kindness to give her portrait a place amongst those of her predecessors in the family, I am sure they will have no cause to be ashamed of their companion; nor do I think that I shall surprise you by naming Mary Alsing as my intended bride."

"No," interrupted the Colonel, in a tone of bitter mockery, "I am by no means surprised.

From you, child of ill-omen, degenerate scion of an ancient stock, nothing can surprise me! But once for all, listen to my irrevocable decision. If you dare to ally yourself with this low-born woman you will have looked upon your mother for the last time. We shall leave Tyringsholm at once, and never, so help me, God! shall there be aught but enmity between you and me to the last hour of my life!"

Klas Malchus felt every pulse throb wildly. "Father! those are cruel words! She—my mother—has she not suffered enough already?"

The Baroness sobbed aloud. "Klas! Klas!" exclaimed she, "do not inflict this anguish upon us? You know your father! I shall never—never see you more! For my sake do not do this!"

"My own dearest mother, I cannot suffer myself to be controlled in a matter to me of such vital importance. Neither threats nor entreaties can alter my determination. I must be happy in my own way; and, as I live, Mary shall be my wife!"

"Would, then, that you were dead!" muttered the Colonel to himself: he then added aloud, "Am I to understand that you have made your decision, and that you choose a life-long separation, and the life-long hatred of your parents, with the contempt of every man of honour?"

“Of contempt there can be no question, and hatred may be appeased. Reflect, sir, that you have another child. Isabel is made to shine in the eyes of the world, even as I am to pursue my own path unnoticed and unknown. It is not my fault if nature and destiny, and perhaps other causes likewise, which I will not here specify, have combined to mould me thus. I am not fitted for the world. Suffer me, therefore, to seek peace and happiness without it.”

“It is not in my power to prevent your doing so; and I shall, in consequence, prepare to leave this place as soon as practicable. Your departure is, therefore, unnecessary.”

“My departure entails no preparation. I detest this place which has proved to me only a source of misery; and if you disdain to inhabit it, I shall let it, for I could never feel happy here.”

“Can you be happy anywhere, with your father’s curse and your mother’s tears as your portion?”

“My happiness will be imperfect indeed; but the conviction that this hostility is the result of an unnatural prejudice, will give me strength to bear it, and to be in some degree happy, as I have nothing with which to reproach myself. It is with my whole heart that I entreat you to take all my worldly goods, and leave me only my personal freedom.”

“Oh no, no; it cannot be possible!” exclaimed the Colonel, in a tone very different from his former one, for it revealed the bitterest anguish: no, no, my son, my beloved son, you cannot wish to break my heart, to drive me mad! **Klas Malchus!** I ——” he was silent, and paced the room with rapid strides “—— I—you do not know what I have done for you—but it was much, very much: do not inflict upon me sorrow heavier than I can bear; for can there be any sorrow more bitter than that of seeing you sunk so low whom I would have raised so high? But my powers of endurance are exhausted: **Klas**, can you bear to look upon your father’s tears?—tears which I have never shed since I can remember, until this day.”

It was true that both the endurance and self-control of the Colonel were exhausted; yet his pride gave him energy to bolt the door leading to the saloon, before, covering his face with his hands, he sank down upon a chair.

Klas Malchus stood horror-struck, gazing at this painful spectacle, but the Baroness raised her eyes to his face and read in it unshaken determination: overpowered by the anguish of her feelings, she would have thrown herself at the feet of her son, but before she could utter a word she fell senseless to the ground.

Klas Malchus, in his alarm, burst open the door

of the red boudoir: Isabel was there sitting upon the sofa in a listening attitude, her hand still clasped in that of Richard, whose agitation during the latter part of this scene had become more and more violent. At the sight of what had occurred in the adjoining room they both started up. The Baroness was raised from the ground and soon restored to consciousness; but the Colonel sate motionless, the image of despair; his grief was silent but intense, and when Isabel took his hand with a look of sympathy, he said in a tone of anguish, "I entreat you at least to make an attempt to bring him to his senses."

But one glance at the fixed countenance of Klas Malchus convinced her of the utter hopelessness of such an effort.

The night was already far advanced when the family separated; Klas Malchus's determination was fixed as fate, but in order to avoid the hell upon earth that a residence at home would now have been, he had given notice of his intention to go abroad, and not to return until he should have attained his majority.

This announcement afforded the Colonel some degree of relief: it gave him time to think. Many changes might occur in the space of two months; and it was something to know that during that time he would be withdrawn from the influence of his mistress.

The Baron had returned to his own apartment, and sat leaning his head upon his hand. Richard was pacing up and down the room. Neither of them thought of going to rest.

"Pray Heaven I may never have to go through such another evening!" said Klas Malchus. "It is terrible to think to what a pitch of insanity people otherwise sensible may be wrought up by a prejudice. I am going away; but, Richard, I leave the treasure of my heart under your guardianship. Look upon her as my betrothed bride, and treat her accordingly."

"If I am not myself in a lunatic asylum before your return, I will do my best to fulfil your trust," replied Richard, whose altered countenance now for the first time attracted the Baron's notice.

"What, have you, too, had an ordeal to pass through?" asked he in astonishment.

"Yes, and a fiery one indeed," replied Richard, vehemently clasping his hands.

"Well, then, explain yourself, and let us share our trials together. Has Isabel refused you?"

Richard started. "Klas," exclaimed he, almost wildly, "do not breathe such a word. If Isabel should reject my proffered love, then—then—"

The Baron went up to him, the vehement agitation depicted on the pale countenance of his cousin, banished his own sorrows from his

thoughts. Klas Malchus loved deeply, sincerely, and with his whole soul; and yet the feelings of his heart were as a dead calm compared with the stormy passions struggling in Richard's bosom, and now excited to a terrific degree by the violent emotions which he had undergone.

"Do not speak of it. I do not know what I may not do even this very night!" And Richard fixed his gaze wildly upon his friend, whose hand was laid kindly and soothingly upon his shoulder.

"No, dear Richard, I will say nothing which can give you pain. Perhaps you will accompany me on my journey, and defer your suit until our return."

"Klas, do you doubt my success? No, I cannot go with you. She has need of me. Klas, Klas, if you knew everything,—all the fearful secrets that weigh upon my soul!"

"Secrets, Richard? Can you not confide them to me, who am so sincerely attached to you?"

"No, that is impossible. I dare not betray them. But what is it that makes you think I should be unable to obtain her hand? Is not her manner affectionate towards me!"

"Undoubtedly; and so much so that, when I come to think of it, it appears to me as if you had only to extend your hand in order to grasp your happiness. But wherefore, then, do you

hesitate? You are wearing yourself out; and why have you not courage to seek the decision of your fate?"

"She always evades me; and this it is which makes me tremble."

"Be assured that she will not evade you when you ask in earnest for her answer; and for that there could be no better opportunity than the present, when you have only to drop a hint that you think of accompanying me on my journey."

"I will think about it:—if I could only see my way clearly! But just now I am in a fever."

Day was already breaking before the two young men retired to rest.

The week which was required to complete Klas Malchus's preparations for his journey passed away as unpleasantly as possible. Not a word was said upon the subject of dissension, which was looked upon as finally settled; but the ceaseless tears of the Baroness, and the Colonel's reserve and freezing coldness, plainly showed how matters stood.

Richard passed the greater part of this week at Tjällstorp. He could not silence the internal conflict which destroyed his peace. He felt that in no case could he accede to the proposal of Klas Malchus; he could not forsake Isabel; and of what use was it then to precipitate a step which,

should it prove vain, must reduce him to the verge of desperation. Klas Malchus constantly sought to encourage him by his looks, and even Isabel did not avoid him; but, notwithstanding, or rather, perhaps, on account of this, he suffered matters to remain as they were; for that was heaven compared to what might be.

His mother beheld the restless melancholy of her son with silent sorrow. She durst not attempt to give him comfort, for she could form no judgment concerning Isabel's feelings, and she knew nothing of the other cause of disquiet, which, at once distinct from and intertwined with his love, absorbed all Richard's thoughts.

During these long and dreary days Klas Malchus and Mary met only twice. She showed more fortitude than he had given her credit for, and he loved her only the better for it. He was himself more tranquil now, for Isabel had solemnly promised him to protect Mary to the utmost of her power, in case the Colonel should attempt to arrogate to himself any right over her. Old Alsing was well pleased not to have been himself mixed up in the affair, nor was he less so to learn that the Baron intended to remain absent until the attainment of his majority; and until then it must of course remain a profound secret that the family of the Sacristan aspired soon to be counted amongst the connexions of the Colonel.

It frequently happens that, when at some distressing period of family discord, we would fain retire into ourselves and close our gates against all the world, lest any should witness the havoc caused by the recent tempest, some guest presents himself at the very moment when he is the least welcome.

Isabel lay reclined upon the *causeuse* in the pavilion in an attitude of repose, which however afforded her none. She had gone through an hour of severe anguish, and anticipated suffering yet harder to bear, for Klas Malchus had given her a hint, that Richard might possibly accompany him on his journey, and Isabel accordingly strove to prepare herself, perhaps on this very evening, to bid farewell to the happiness of her life. She had not seen Richard for the last two days, and now listened for the tramp of his horse's hoofs,—but she heard nothing.

Klas Malchus was busy arranging his books and papers, and inditing two long epistles, one of which was to afford some consolation to Mary at the hour of parting,—the other was for his mother whom he still loved as fondly as ever, although she too had taken part against him.

Baroness Eugénie moved silently about, preparing her son's linen, and thinking the while how bitter was the knowledge that she must not look for comfort to the prospect of reunion. And the Colonel, was he at ease? He did not look

so, to judge by his pale face, as, still attired in his dressing-gown, contrary to his afternoon custom, he moved restlessly in his arm-chair.

In the midst of this discomfort a carriage rolled up to the hall door. All the four, in their several retreats, heard it with equal displeasure, and all agreed in wishing the unwelcome guest anywhere but there.

“What a confounded plague it is that people cannot stay at home!” muttered the Colonel, to whom for the first time in his life the arrival of a stranger was disagreeable. He however approached the window, when whom should he see but the Chamberlain Von Brude, who for some motive known to himself alone, had found it necessary to hasten his return to Stockholm, and consequently, his visit to Tyringsholm also.

“This is, indeed, an opportune moment for a guest to arrive!” thought the Colonel, hastily putting on his coat. “And Richard away too!—but even he has been quite unlike himself for some time past. I really think every body is losing their senses!”

The Chamberlain had already entered the lower hall, before the Colonel was in a condition to appear, which he would scarcely have been so soon, but that here was an opportunity of promoting a very advantageous connexion, a thing which, more especially under present circumstances, was by no means to be neglected.

“ Ah! here is my kind host!” exclaimed the Chamberlain: “ you must excuse me, my dear Colonel, for making my appearance thus unexpectedly, but business of importance compels me to return to Stockholm, and I have only two days left at my own disposal.”

That is just twice too much, thought the Colonel, but his smooth tongue betrayed not a trace of such a feeling, as amidst a profusion of compliments and civil speeches he conducted his guest to the saloon, lamenting in the same breath the shortness of the Chamberlain’s intended stay; and the degree of confusion in which he would find them, in consequence of the impending departure of his son, who was going to travel abroad. “ Nothing can be more usual,” continued the Colonel, “ than for a young man to complete his education by a course of foreign travel, but Klas Malchus has hitherto been so little at home, that the news of this project, which owing to the extreme sensibility of my wife’s nerves I had hitherto kept secret, has quite upset her; and I fear, therefore, that we are not altogether in such a state as I could have wished to be on so very agreeable an occasion.”

The Baroness and Isabel soon after made their appearance. The former never had much to say, and was now more silent than ever; but the Chamberlain, who was prepared to find her in

low spirits, looked upon the few words she uttered, as the result of an effort to show him every possible attention.

Isabel exerted herself to the uttermost: still every now and then the Chamberlain's observations fell unheeded upon her ear, and her glance was constantly directed towards the window, but in vain,—Richard came not.

“For Heaven's sake, dear Malchus,” said the Baroness to her husband, that evening, “take that tiresome man over to Tjällstorp to-morrow. If he has any designs in that quarter, he will of course be glad of an opportunity of carrying them into effect.”

“Yes, of course, I am obliged to watch over the interests of the whole family! Eugénie, this a wretched time—the most distressing period of my whole existence. It will cost me my health, perhaps even my life, and all on account of your delightful son.”

The Baroness sighed, and was silent.

“I hope Baroness Ebba and her daughter are quite well?” asked the Chamberlain, the following morning, at breakfast.

“Very well, I thank you,” replied the Colonel, “they live not far from hence, and I am sure it would give my sister-in-law great pleasure if you would drive over with me to Tjällstorp. The Major is from home attending the field exercises; but his son will represent him.”

"I shall gladly avail myself of your proposal," replied the Chamberlain, smiling; "for I could not leave the neighbourhood without having paid my respects to the ladies."

"You will have very fine weather for your drive," observed the Baroness; but she coloured a little when, on turning towards the window, she beheld a thick fog; the Chamberlain was, however, too civil to contradict her, and it was settled that they should go over to Tjällstorp after dinner. The morning was spent in seeing all that was to be seen at Tytingsholm. The Chamberlain was very civil and praised and admired everything, and the Colonel felt a slight return of his old pride and pleasure in such things. It was only transitory, however; for to judge by the present aspect of affairs this splendid abode would not long be his residence.

A messenger was despatched to Tjällstorp to give notice to Baroness Ebba of the projected visit.

The latter, feeling that after the Chamberlain's attentions to Virginie, he could scarcely have come so far out of his way without some ulterior object, immediately sought Richard in his own room. But all thought except that of anxiety for him vanished from her mind, when she found him seated with folded arms, and a countenance expressive of deep dejection.

"Richard, my dearest Richard, do you not hear me? I wish so much to talk to you."

"No, not now! pray do not," replied he with an abruptness very unlike his usual manner; "I was just going down to the mill."

"I think you did not go to Tyringsholm yesterday, Richard?" continued his mother, appearing not to notice his gloomy looks. "I am sure Isabel misses you much."

"Oh, no."

"Oh, yes; that is very evident from what she writes." Baroness Ebba unfolded the note she had just received.

"Let me see; let me read it myself!" and Richard read as follows:—

"DEAREST AUNT,

"The 'Chamberlain von Brude arrived here yesterday evening, and wishes to pay you a visit at Tjällstorp this afternoon. Papa will accompany him: how are you all at my dear, beautiful Tjällstorp? Farming seems to take up a great deal of Richard's time; give my love to him. Here at Tyringsholm we are even more dull than usual.

"Your affectionate

"ISABEL."

"Yes, more dull than usual," repeated Richard in a tone of some irritation.

"Do not be unreasonable, dear Richard; I do

not see what else she could well have said. But I see you are getting impatient, so let us think of the beginning of the note. What do you suppose brings the Chamberlain von Brude hither? Do you not think I ought to speak to Virginie?"

"No, dear mamma: in such cases every one had better act for themselves."

"Of course there can be no question of compulsion; but it would be a desirable marriage."


"Heaven knows what is desirable and what is not; my advice would be to make no plans, and leave Virginie to herself."

And this Baroness Ebba did; she only said—"Virginie, you must dress to-day, for the Chamberlain is at Tyringsholm, and he and your uncle are coming over here this afternoon."

About five o'clock, accordingly, the Colonel's carriage drove up to the steps, which had been freshly strewn with shoots of fir. The Lieutenant received them with an ease and *aplomb* which would have done honour to an experienced man of the world; yet the Colonel was vexed to observe that his appearance gave little token of his usual cheerful animation.

"I hope, Richard, you have not been ill?"

"No, uncle, thank you, not at all; but I have had my hands full of business; and I wished to have got through something at least before my father's return."



After coffee they went down into the garden. The Chamberlain admired everything, but although he paid great attention to Virginie there was no appearance of his seeking any private conference with her; and the Colonel was beginning to tremble lest he might again find himself mistaken, when to his great joy he heard the Chamberlain ask Baroness Ebba's permission to return the next morning to take leave of her.

"Nothing can be going on better," said he to his wife on his return; "of course I shall beg him to drive thither to-morrow by himself."

The morrow came, and with it the Chamberlain.

Baroness Ebba was alone, and conducted him into the drawing-room, where she had the pleasure of receiving from him a formal proposal for the hand of her daughter. He pleaded the pressing nature of the business which recalled him to Stockholm, in excuse for his somewhat unbecoming precipitation; added a great deal about the impression that Mademoiselle Virginie had made upon his heart, and ended by touching lightly upon his own fortune and his advantageous position in the world.

The Baroness expressed her regret that her husband was not at home, adding, however, that if Virginie gave her consent, she entertained no doubt that her father, who had her happiness sincerely at heart, would do the same. She then told the Chamberlain that Virginie was in

the garden, and proposed to him to seek he there.

The wooer, who was not without his fair share of assurance, hastened gladly in search of his intended bride. Virginie was soon found, and M. von Brude addressed himself to his task with all the eloquence he could command. Virginie was not likely to forget the speech he made her, for the introduction was as brilliant as the conclusion to which it led; but notwithstanding all this, the Chamberlain had the utterly unexpected mortification of hearing the little country girl reply with as much decision as courtesy, that it was not in her power to accede to his wishes.

In the conversation which ensued upon this declaration, both the Chamberlain and the Baroness suggested that she should take time for reflection, but Virginie unhesitatingly assured them that her decision was unalterable.

The Baroness now withdrew with her daughter into another room.

“My dear Virginie,”—said she, “I think you are deciding too hastily! you do not yet know what you refuse; and as your heart is untouched—— but, my dear,—why should you blush, and turn away? Surely it is impossible! In the whole circle of our acquaintance, I do not know of any man who could possibly have gained your affection.”

“Oh no, Mamma, of course not; but why need

I accept the very first who offers himself? Is it because I am poor?—but in that case, I would rather remain single all my life.”

“Well, as you please, my dear.” Baroness Ebba loved her daughter too well, to seek to persuade her; and the Chamberlain went away with a refusal.

It would be difficult to say which of the two was the most disappointed at this result, the Chamberlain, or the Colonel who seemed doomed to witness the defeat of all his most cherished schemes. On the return of M. Von Brude, a single glance was sufficient to acquaint him with the issue of the affair, and between two people of such exquisite delicacy as the host and his guest, of course no further explanation could be even thought of.

When the Chamberlain was at length gone, the Colonel, trembling with suppressed vexation, said, with an expressive gesture. “Well, there is at least thus much gained; the girl can say that she once had a proposal. But it seems that people are as insane at Tjällstorp, as they are at Tyringsholm! I am waiting in expectation of what is to happen next.”

He did not know that the worst was yet to come.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening: Klas Malchus had just entered, in order to pass the last evening before his departure with his family,

and if possible, to part with them on terms of greater cordiality. He had been to see Mary, and had promised to bid her good-bye the next morning, at sunrise, in the church-yard. His heart was softened, and he longed for a look of reconciliation, a word of kindness.

The Colonel sate in a corner of the sofa, looking stern and gloomy as a winter's night. The Baroness was silent, finishing a pocket-book for her son; and Isabel stood by the window, her face even paler than usual. A heavy cloud hung over the family.

"Here comes Richard!" exclaimed Baron Klas, heartily glad to see his friend again. He hoped too that he would help to make the evening pass more pleasantly; at any rate, he could not have come at a more opportune moment.

Isabel's hand trembled a little as it rested upon the table. "Dear Isabel," whispered Klas, "do cheer him."

A few minutes elapsed before Richard entered; he perceived at a glance that his presence was welcome to all as a relief from the *gêne* under which they were labouring, and when he beheld the bright glow upon Isabel's pale cheek, saw her eyes smile upon him, and felt how kindly the light pressure of his hand was returned, his spirit revived, and hope and joy awoke again within his soul; for slight as it was, he had perceived the

trembling of her hand. In order to make sure of this important fact, he had even taken it again within his own, and had satisfied himself that he was not mistaken.

He was determined now to drain the intoxicating draught to the dregs, but first he would try to place matters upon a smoother and pleasanter footing. This done, he would ask Isabel to walk with him to the pavilion. The moon was at the full—it would afford light enough for him to receive his sentence of life or death.

Richard had never appeared to greater advantage than on this evening. He seemed to influence all around him as by a magnet power. He was so kind, so sympathizing, yet so cheerful. Isabel's heart throbbed convulsively under the influence of the spell, although a smile was on her lips; it was impossible to resist him—impossible to behold the glow of life upon his cheek, the brightness of his eye, the speaking expression of his countenance, and not to yield to the fascinating charm of the moment.

Yet, notwithstanding Richard's exertions, all present seemed ill at ease, and the momentary gaiety he called forth passed away as suddenly as an electric flash. This was especially the case with the Colonel; did some inward presentiment warn him that he stood upon the brink of a volcano which at any moment might burst forth and over-

whelm him in destruction? The clock struck nine. Just then the sound of wheels was heard coming slowly up the approach. It was no splendid carriage and four, rattling proudly into the court, but a humble little droschky with a pair of post-horses. Richard, who was seated beside Isabel, had not sufficient curiosity to get up and see what it was. Klas Malchus had never been curious in his life, and the sound of the wheels sufficed to convince the Colonel that it was nothing about which it was worth his while to trouble himself; he merely turned his head towards the window, and said in a tone of annoyance, "Are we never to be let alone?—what can bring that shabby equipage hither?"

A few minutes after a servant entered with a card, saying, "a gentleman wishes to speak to the Colonel!" The Baroness held out her hand for the card, glanced at it hastily, and sank to the ground in convulsions.

"What fresh calamity has fallen upon us?" muttered the Colonel, as he stooped to pick up the card: the name inscribed upon it was short and simple, but it had power to drive the last tinge of colour from the Colonel's cheeks, as he turned and tottered towards the door.

CHAPTER IV.

“Do you wish for any fresh rolls to-day, Ma’am?”

It was with these words that the undying Mrs. Westergren entered Doctor Manning’s kitchen, precisely as she had done one-and-twenty years before.

The lapse of this period of time had transformed Mrs. Westergren from a comely and bustling housewife into an old and cumbrous matron, but her reputation was so firmly established that she had nothing to fear from the rivalry of younger women, and many of her lady customers who had grown old with her, would as soon have dispensed with their coffee and snuff as with Mrs. Westergren’s budget of gossip.

Mrs. Manning, too, was no longer the inquisitive, impetuous, nimble-footed young woman, that she was when we first made her acquaintance.

She no longer wearied her husband with fruitless questions, or endeavoured to extract his secrets by cunning stratagems ; all this was beneath her dignity. She was now a starched and stately lady, priding herself on her blooming daughters, and holding a foremost place in the society of M—— ; nevertheless, she condescended occasionally to enjoy half an hour's gossip with old Mrs. Westergren, who had always been a favourite with her, so that there had even grown up between them a sort of intimacy, such as was compatible with the difference between their respective stations.

“ Come in, come in, Mrs. Westergren,” said Mrs. Manning, and Mrs. Westergren sailed in with her basket under her arm, and took her usual seat beside the hearth, saying, “ Dear heart ! what a thing it is for an old woman to get a comfortable seat.”

“ Yes, we are neither of us so young as we used to be, my good Mrs. Westergren, and you must be some twelve or thirteen years older than me. But have you got any news to tell me ? Have you been with the Burgomaster's lady to-day ?”

“ Yes, ma'am ; and got a handsome order for rolls for the great dinner. I do think the Burgomaster's lady holds her head even higher than ever, since her husband retired, and her son succeeded him in office—and no wonder either, for the young

Burgomaster is a fine noble-looking young man; the whole town is agreed that there can be but one young lady that would do for him."

"That is because other people always know our business better than we know it ourselves," replied Mrs. Manning, not a little gratified. "My Mina has so many to choose amongst, that I really am at a loss what to advise. I may say, thank God, that all my children are a credit to their father and mother, but there is something peculiar in Mina's appearance, for she was born the very year of that strange occurrence at Mrs. Björkman's. The night that Doctor Manning was sent for thither, I in my simplicity, got up to open the door myself, in order that he might not be needlessly disturbed; but never shall I forget what a fright I got! There stood a tall man with a great moustache, wrapped up in a cloak, who terrified me almost to death—luckily the adventure had no worse consequences than that my Mina was born with black sparkling eyes, just like those of the stranger—but that is a long time ago, Mrs. Westergren."

"You may say that, ma'am; you may say that! All that business happened at the end of August, 18—, and I have often wondered in my own mind what has since come of it. I suppose the secret will die with Mrs. Björkman, who cannot last many days."

"Dear me ! I had no idea that she was so ill. When that woman first came here I could not endure her, but I have since found that she understands her business. My husband persuaded me to employ her after old Mrs. Struttelirs' death, and now I really think she will be a great loss to the town. But come, you must have a glass of *liqueur* before you go."

The night after this edifying conversation, the Doctor's wife had just fallen asleep, and was in the midst of a delightful dream, in which Mina and the young Burgomaster appeared together at the altar, when she was roused by a hurried knock at the house door.

Once only in the whole course of her married life had Mrs. Manning taken the trouble of getting up to open the door herself,—she now leisurely put out her hand and rang the bell—the Doctor awoke.

"What is the matter?" asked he, yawning.

"I don't know. Did not you hear the knocking at the door? I have rung for Lisa to go and open it."

At that moment the shuffling of Lisa's slippers announced her entrance.

"Did you ring, ma'am?"

Mrs. Manning was already half asleep. "Take down the key from the nail. There is another of those confounded knocks," growled the Doctor.

Lisa shuffled away, half-awake as she was, and after nine fruitless attempts, succeeded, at the tenth, in opening the door.

A message was delivered, and Lisa returned to the bed-room somewhat quicker than she left it.

"Well?" said the Doctor.

"It is a message from Mrs. Björkman," replied Lisa, "and it is a matter of life and death! She entreats you, sir, as you hope for mercy, to go to her immediately! she has been taken much worse to-night, and insists upon speaking to Doctor Manning."

Mrs. Manning, now wide awake, started up.—
"What? she insists on speaking to you? there must be something that is not as it should be. Now do make haste, dear Manning! Depend upon it the old story will come out now."

"What old story?" asked the Doctor, who had long since forgotten the mystery which had so excited his wife.

"What! don't you remember the lady behind the curtain? Don't you recollect why you gave me the black silk gown? I was always convinced that it was some lady of consequence."

The Doctor smiled. "The summons cannot have anything to do with that," said he.

Mrs. Manning was right, however—it *had* to do with that.

In the dimly lighted room into which the Doc-

tor was ushered he found not only the sick woman and the clergyman of the parish, but also a magistrate, with pen, ink, and paper before him.

"What does this mean?" asked Doctor Manning, still a hale and vigorous man, whom the burden of upwards of fifty years did not seem in the least to oppress. Casting a look of astonishment round the room, he approached the bed: "I am sorry to find, Mrs. Björkman, that your old complaint has taken a serious turn."

"Yes, sir, it is all over with me now, Gódd help me! I feel the hand of death upon me! But it is not on that account that I have sent for you, Doctor. It is that you may witness a confession which my conscience admonishes me to make before it is too late. It is true I bound myself to silence by an oath, but now that I have opened my heart to his Reverence there, I know that such an oath cannot be binding. God forgive me for having suffered myself to be bought over to keep such a secret, and may you too forgive me, sir, for having involved you, without your knowledge, in so infamous a business!"

"I cannot understand one word of all this, Mrs. Björkman; are you sure that you are not wandering?"

"No, indeed; I wish I were. And, Doctor, your evidence will be just as important as my own. You probably remember that one-and-twenty years ago, come August, in this very

room, you attended a young gentlewoman during her confinement, under a promise of secrecy."

"Yes, I remember; but what of that?"

"That is what I have now to explain."

Mrs. Björkman's statement was then taken down with the utmost minuteness, in the form of a deposition, and signed and witnessed in due form. A poor woman, who had been at that time in Mrs. Björkman's service, gave in her evidence that on the night of the 30th of August, of the said year, she had distinctly heard the cries of a new-born infant in the closed room. To this was added the evidence of the Doctor, who affirmed upon oath that on that same night, and in that same chamber, he had been present at the birth of a male child.

The matter was discussed at length in the little council, and the result of the deliberation was, that, duly authenticated copies having been taken of the depositions, the Doctor, putting them in his pocket, set off the following morning upon a journey, the object of which was for the present kept a secret from his wife. It was not long, however, before she, in common with all the ladies of M——, even down to Mrs. Westergren, enjoyed the inestimable privilege of discussing these long-past events, the recent consequences of which not only put the little town of M—— into a state of greatest excitement, but even, for a time, attracted the attention of the whole country.

CHAPTER V.

"THIS is a very agreeable surprise," said the Colonel, leading the way to the further end of his own apartments; "very agreeable indeed! I presume, Doctor, you are journeying through this part of the country, and have taken us in your way?"

"I have here reached the goal of my journey," replied the Doctor, in a tone which not only convinced the Colonel of the fact, but effectually checked his accustomed fluency. His attempts to make some appropriate rejoinder were utterly unsuccessful.

"Lieutenant Richard L—— is, I believe, at present residing at Tyringsholm?" pursued the Doctor, in a tone of enquiry.

"How!" stammered the Colonel. "Are you acquainted with —— with——. I thought—that

is, I was not aware —— I—.” An extraordinary change passed over his countenance, and, abruptly seating himself, he mechanically signed to the Doctor to do the same.

“It is a long time since we have met, Colonel. you have probably long since forgotten the incognito you then assumed.”

“By no means. It would scarcely be possible for me to forget the services of the Doctor to whose skill I am indebted for the life of my wife and son.”

“Perhaps so; as the life of the latter was of such great importance. You are, however, by no means indebted to me for the fortunate circumstance which brought the young Baron into the world a few days before his cousin.”

“Very true; it was God’s will,” replied the Colonel, with the assumed composure of a person who is as yet in ignorance of the ground on which he treads.

“Perhaps,” continued the Doctor, “I might trouble you to send for Lieutenant L—. My business concerns you jointly.”

“Impossible,” faltered the Colonel; “we have no joint interests.”

Doctor Manning fixed a grave and searching glance upon the countenance of his host, which assumed an ashy hue. “I am afraid, Colonel,” said he, in a tone which thrilled through every

nerve of the hearer, "that your memory is somewhat defective."

"What am I to understand by such language?" demanded the Colonel, rising and summoning to his assistance all that yet remained to him of self-control and wounded pride, with which, if possible, to conceal his terror.

"What are you to understand?" broke forth the Doctor, whose stock of patience and politeness was exhausted. "You are to understand that Mrs. Björkman, the midwife at M——, has revealed the whole of the atrocious transaction by which you succeeded in wresting the entailed estate of Tyringsholm from its lawful heir. These statements (and he drew the papers from his pocket) were drawn up by a magistrate, in my presence and that of the clergyman. My evidence given upon oath as to the day upon which Baron Klas was born, was compared with the date in the parish register—and for the error in the latter you will, I conclude, be at no loss to account. I have only to add, that justice will not fail to bring the truth to light; but Swedish honour will contemplate such a trial with amazement; and the infamy that will be heaped upon the name of X—— will be such as the act of its present representative has merited."

As weak in the hour of danger as he had been arrogant in prosperity, the Colonel leant

against the chimney corner, motionless as if he had been suddenly turned to stone. The words "justice," "trial," "infamy," "the name of X——" rang in his ears, and seemed to have paralysed all his faculties. His eyes were glazed—his countenance livid. It was a fearful sight.

"The dose was too strong," muttered the Doctor, laying his hand upon the bell.

The Colonel perceived it, and by a gesture endeavoured to stop him; but it was too late. The servants hastened to obey the summons.

Unable as he was to make any resistance, he was soon conveyed to bed; and a few moments after, the Lieutenant and Klas Malchus entered his room.

"Doctor Manning!" exclaimed Richard, starting back. "I understand!"

A sharp half-stifled cry burst from the lips of the Colonel. The Doctor dismissed the servants, and bolted the door.

"Gentlemen," said he, turning to the two young men, "my presence here will cause a great change in your relative positions. Colonel X——, you are able to speak: command yourself. You owe it to this young man to make an exertion.

Klas Malchus turned his amazed and inquiring glance from his father to Richard, and from Richard to the Doctor who still held the important papers.

"Will these afford an explanation?" said he, extending his hand.

The Doctor gave them to him. There was no further object in concealment; for matters could not remain as they were.

The Colonel watched Klas Malchus intently, as he perused the fatal documents, which were so many blots upon the escutcheon of his house. For a long time no sound was heard but his deep and laborious breathing:—at length he approached the bed.

"My father," he said, slowly, but in a voice of thrilling anguish, "oh, my father!" and he shook his head with an expression of bitter grief to Richard, even more heart-rending than his words, "I know now what it is that has darkened my whole life, and will darken it even to its close—the dishonour of our name! It was an accursed burden that was laid upon me, together with that ill-fated estate. I am delivered from it now, it is true, but can I ever again look an honest man in the face? Was I not right in seeking to hide myself from the world? A curse upon pride and covetousness;—by them my soul was bartered even before I was born into this world of misery." Cold dew stood upon his brow, and two large tears rolled over his pale cheeks. His was despair in its noblest form.

Richard clasped his arms around his friend.

At this moment of bitter suffering he upon whom Fortune was heaping her treasures appeared as much cast down as he who was about to lose his all.

“Klas,” pleaded Richard, “only hear me! Nothing is yet made public. I have suspected this ever since last winter; and do you suppose that if I had ever intended to assert my rights, I should have remained all this time inactive?”


“Madness!” exclaimed Klas. “No, there is no middle course. There shall be none. But (and he shuddered convulsively) is not that my mother’s voice? Oh, God! my mother!” And, before any one could prevent him, he had rushed to the door, and flung it open.

The Baroness entered, her agitated countenance as pale as death, and trembling in every limb. Isabel followed her in silence to the Colonel’s bedside.

But let us turn from this scene of passion and of misery. It is only when the storm has expended its fury—when the season of delirium is over, and the sufferers have recovered composure and self-command, that it is seasonable to return to them with enquiries into their condition. Meanwhile we will give the reader an insight into the events, the results of which we have just witnessed.

It will be recollected that when the late proprietor of Tyringsholm celebrated the marriage of his two daughters, considerable interest and excitement was caused by the uncertainty as to which of the two would be the first to give birth to a son, and, in consequence, an heir to the *majorat* and entailed property of Tyringsholm; for, failing the male line, the inheritance was to descend through a female.

Baroness Eugénie's love for her husband amounted, in the early days of her married life, to absolute idolatry. It must be admitted that at that time, that is, two-and-twenty years before the period of which we are now treating, Colonel X—— was a very handsome and attractive man; and such was the power he exercised over his wife that she would have died rather than drawn upon herself a look of displeasure from him. The Colonel's selfishness was, indeed, even at that time, tolerably evident; but Eugénie did not view it in its true light, looking upon it rather as a necessary attribute of his "superior nature;" and she loved the yoke imposed upon her by this superiority, which was still gilded by all the brilliant hues of love and imagination. Weak characters—and Baroness Eugénie was one of these—ever feel the necessity of submitting to the guidance of one stronger than themselves. And in those days of prosperity, when he had no



shadowy fears to haunt him, Baron X—— had both the determination and the talent needful to establish his ascendancy over the majority of those with whom he came in contact.

The thoughts of this ambitious man were constantly fixed upon the *majorat*, and the noble domain of Tyringsholm. The mere idea that it might not devolve upon his son filled his mind with all the torture which, to a proud and imperious spirit, is ever the concomitant of failure. The nearer the time approached for the confinement of the two young wives, the more absent and restless he became; while the hopes with which his wife endeavoured to soothe him, as they had no real foundation, could have little effect. He at length sunk into absolute despondency, and in order to rouse and cheer him, if possible, his wife acceded readily to the singular proposal (which he clothed however in the most endearing and caressing terms,) that for the benefit of her health they should spend the last month in travelling, and leave it to accident to decide where the expected heir should first behold the light.

The Baroness suggested that if travelling were so beneficial they might at least select Tyringsholm as the goal of their journey, which would afford great satisfaction to her father; but against this the Colonel had a thousand good reasons to urge, of which the last and most touching was, that in case

of the disappointment of their hopes, it would be doubly painful to witness the rejoicings at the birth of the real heir.—“No, my own dearest Eugénie,” such was the language he then employed, “let us remain alone together:—let us have no witnesses of our rapture or of one bitter disappointment. Am I not all in all to you, my beloved wife? I am persuaded that it must be the same to you where our child is cradled, provided my devotion watches over both you and him.”

Far less would have sufficed to ensure Eugénie’s compliance with any wish of her husband. They set out on their journey, and the Baroness really found herself the better for the constant change of air and scene. They took no servant with them, and the Colonel himself enacted the part of attendant to his wife.

Towards the middle of August, Eugénie declared herself unable any longer to continue this wandering life. The Colonel had already, without her knowledge, prepared for her an asylum in the remote little town of M——, where he had secured the services of the skilful midwife with whom we are acquainted, and who was already known to him. Nothing could be more convenient; but now arose the first difficulty, namely, that the Baroness would by no means consent to be separated from her husband, and he could not be lodged in the nurse’s house.



"But," pleaded Eugénie, "I did not mind travelling, and would not have minded awaiting my time even in the remotest village, provided you were with me, and why should you not be? we might hire lodgings, and send for the nurse when she is wanted.

"It shall be exactly as you like, dearest; but I thought it an excellent arrangement by which you would be constantly under the eye of so skilful a nurse: this could not be the case if we took an apartment elsewhere, and I should be in a state of anxiety which would almost drive me mad. While you were in Mrs. Björkman's house I should feel quite at ease, and I could find lodgings close by.

Baroness Eugénie did not understand this species of anxious tenderness, but persuaded that her husband's whim sprung from the intensity of his affection, she consented to take up her abode in the nurse's house under a strict incognito, and the Colonel contrived that their arrival should take place at night.


The Baroness soon perceived with astonishment that she was subjected to a kind of detention. She was neither permitted to walk nor to drive abroad, but daily received the most affectionate notes from her husband. Mrs. Björkman insisted that the most absolute repose was necessary, so she sate still in her own room, and wept over the

strange caprices which even love itself would dictate.

By means of a secret system of *espionage*, the Colonel obtained information of all that passed in his brother-in-law's house; and at every post which brought no disquieting intelligence, a weight seemed lifted from his heart.

At length however, the moment arrived which was destined to call forth all the evil passions of his nature, of which, hitherto, only faint indications had manifested themselves. At the very moment that he received the tidings from Mrs. Björkman that his wife was taken ill, he also obtained information through the above mentioned private channel (for his brother-in-law was as ignorant of his whereabouts as the old Baron) that Baroness Ebba had given birth to a son who, according to the date of the letter, must be at that time three days old.

The Colonel hid the letter in his pocket and hastened to his wife, but no outward sign revealed to her the storm that was raging in his bosom. Two hours later he had the additional annoyance of hearing that it was absolutely necessary to call in a physician. Then it was, that, as related at the beginning of this history, the Colonel hastened in person to fetch Doctor Manning, from whom, on the way back, he exacted his word of honour, that he would never in conversation with any one allude even



in the remotest manner, to what had passed that night. The Doctor was at all times a reserved man ; he knew that discretion was one of the first duties of a physician, and gave his promise unconditionally. The Colonel on his side had obtained sufficient information concerning Doctor Manning's character, to be perfectly satisfied that he might depend on him.

The event was satisfactory—and the Baroness was safely delivered of a son.


A letter was to be despatched by the next morning's post, but a weighty point remained to be settled before the Colonel could announce the birth of his son to his father-in-law and other relations. While the Baroness slept, a long consultation took place between himself and Mrs. Björkman, the result of which was, that in consideration of the payment of a very considerable sum of money, the latter promised to represent the birth of the little Baron to the Provost as having taken place four whole days before the event actually occurred. She was ready to lay her life that Doctor Manning would never speak to the Provost about the matter ; he himself was an old man, whose memory was much impaired, and no sooner had he recorded the child's birth in the parish register than he would forget all about it.

The measure was a bold one, but the Colonel saw plainly that it would be easy of execution.

Its very audacity might have contributed to shield it from suspicion and detection, but for the circumstance of the Doctor having been called in. As it was, he was obliged to trust to the physician's promise, and to hope that the whole affair would soon vanish from his memory as well as from that of the Provost.

Meanwhile Baron Klas Malchus was christened by the Provost, and his birth registered as having taken place on the 26th, instead of the 30th of August. Letters were forthwith despatched to Tyringsholm and to Major L——, stating that the Baroness's life had been in such danger, that the Colonel, in his anxiety and distress, had delayed notifying the birth of his son until he could add to it the consolatory assurance of his wife's safety. He added that, as was but natural, he was impatient to obtain tidings of his sister-in-law, and to know whether she had been beforehand with Eugénie in giving an heir to Tyringsholm, etc. etc.

The Colonel did not see Doctor Manning again before his departure; he had penetration enough to perceive that the repetition of his request for silence might awaken suspicion. Mrs. Björkman reiterated her assurance, that the Doctor never spoke to any human being of the secrets which came to his knowledge in the course of his practice, and that he had no doubt already forgotten on what day of the month he had been



called in. And so the Colonel set out with his wife on his return home, well pleased that this important affair had been so satisfactorily arranged.

It was on the journey that he imparted to his wife—who was now sufficiently recovered to bear the intelligence—the tortures he had endured on receiving the news of her sister's confinement, and the measures which, in his despair, he had adopted, and which for his sake and that of their child, it was now her duty to corroborate and conceal, the more so that the certificates of the infant's birth and baptism had been already transmitted to Tyringsholm.

But now, at length, a spark of energy awoke in the bosom of Baroness Eugénie. In her first anguish, on being apprised of the deed, which even her devotion for her husband could not induce her to look upon in any other light than that of a heinous act of spoliation, she resolved, notwithstanding all that had taken place, to reveal the truth. "Never," exclaimed she with vehemence, "never will I be the accomplice of a crime which deprives Ebba's child of his rights; no, never, Malchus, whatever you may do to me—never!"

"I shall do nothing to you," replied her husband, "but if you think I could survive such a disgrace you deceive yourself. I will not tell you

my determination, you shall first have time to reconsider *yours*."

Their road lay through a gloomy and solitary forest region. As they were traversing it, the Colonel alighted from the carriage. "Where are you going to, Malchus?" asked the Baroness.

"Up to yonder height, from which the view is beautiful. If you wish to come with me you had better give the child to the nurse." This nurse had been hired in a town at some distance from M——, and knew nothing of the incognito that had been so recently laid aside by her employers.

Eugénie followed her husband in silence.

The Colonel stood still on the brink of a precipice, at the foot of which a torrent dashed foaming along its rocky bed, with a noise like thunder. He turned to his wife; never had she seen his habitually smooth countenance express such intensity of feeling. "Eugénie," said he, in a tone which he well knew would not fail to make its way straight to her heart, "Eugénie, my beloved, my adored wife, I cannot conceal from you the anguish and remorse to which I am a prey. I would give my very life to be at this moment the poorest among men. But I would give a thousand lives, if I had them, to preserve my name from dishonour, for under that burden I could not exist. It is now for you to decide—will you restore me to peace by binding yourself

to silence by a solemn oath? Will you, when you see your husband, your devoted husband, here at your feet imploring your pity? If you refuse, another moment will leave you free to act according to your will. Look down at the roaring flood below—if you refuse, I will seek refuge in its waves. You know, Eugénie, I am not deficient in courage; my words are not those of empty menace.”

“Oh, Malchus, I cannot—I cannot take that oath. No, let us fly to some spot so lonely, so remote, that there neither scorn nor infamy can pursue us.”

The Colonel shook his head,—despair was stamped upon his countenance.

“Well then, Malchus,”—the tones of her faltering voice expressed the deepest tenderness and resignation—“take me with you, we will die together, for I will not forsake you!”

This romantic determination was by no means to the Colonel’s taste; for of course he had not the remotest intention of carrying his threat into execution. To die there like a dog would, he thought, be the act of a fool, and one for which, moreover, he had not courage. It was essential, therefore, to conquer his wife’s scruples of conscience.

“Eugénie, what do you propose? Would you leave your infant fatherless and motherless, and

branded with disgrace? Can you be thus unnatural? Your's is not a mother's heart! Moreover, what purpose would it serve? were we to die here together, how could the claims of your sister's child be brought to light."

"No, I must not die," replied the wretched Eugénie; "what you say is true, I must not die."

"But *I may* die!" almost shrieked her husband, springing forward with an impetus that to one less dexterous and active might not have been unattended with danger. This time he had not been miscalculated. Eugénie flung her arms around him, and forcibly held him back.

"I will swear, for I cannot behold your death. But from this day forward, my existence will be one of pining anguish—one life-long struggle with death."

And the Baroness swore a solemn oath to preserve her husband's secret; but with the words of that oath, peace departed for ever from her bosom.

During the next few years the Colonel strove by his tenderness and solicitude to cheer her profound melancholy; by degrees, however, as he felt himself more secure in the possession of his stolen treasure, his feelings cooled towards her, though, as he was always attentive and polite, and especially careful of outward appearances, he seemed the model of an affectionate husband. But Eugénie felt that he was so no longer; and

her love too was extinguished for ever, leaving nothing behind it but the all-powerful habit of blind submission.

During these long and weary years Eugénie found some compensation in her children, but even this was in a great measure qualified. Klas Malchus, the son who had cost her so dear, early displayed great peculiarity of character, and a constitutional melancholy which she was ill-calculated to counteract. So far from it, she fostered his inclination for solitary occupations; he seldom mingled with other children, but was reared amidst the sighs and tears of his mother, from whom he always found indulgence and support in all his difficulties and disputes. As to her daughter, the Baroness easily made the discovery that no great sympathy could exist between them; and although she dearly loved the little Isabel, she nevertheless readily consented to the proposal that her education should be conducted amidst more cheerful scenes. Madame Malmrös undertook this responsible office; but it was not until Isabel was domiciled with her wealthy aunt, and Klas Malchus gone to school, that Baroness Eugénie became fully sensible of the misery of a life devoid alike of peace and of hope. The Colonel's character became every year more irrevocably fixed in its own peculiar bent. In body and mind he was like a smoothly polished stone, serving no other


purpose than to make a splendid appearance in the eyes of the world. The world (that portion of it, namely, to which the Colonel vouchsafed that appellation,) was all in all to him; and, therefore, in order to secure an advantageous position in it for himself and his family, he had sacrificed everything.

But the Colonel had long to wait before he could reap the fruit of so much toil and anxiety; and the son, during whose minority he had promised himself a reign of many years at Tyringsholm, had nearly attained his twentieth year before the old Baron at length made way for him to establish himself, as we have seen, in the inheritance of his successor. But the year had not yet expired before the avenging Nemesis presented herself at the Colonel's gates, and claimed her rights.

His reign was brief indeed.

Before resuming the thread of our narrative, we must, for the sake of clearness, advert to the circumstance which had roused such a tempest of conflicting feelings in the bosom of the guileless and unsuspecting Richard.

It will probably be remembered that, when Doctor Manning had set Richard's broken arm at the inn at Duinge, he had refused to accept any payment, urging that he never included in the returns of his practice, such casual assistance as he



might be called upon to afford when on a journey. Meanwhile, Richard's pride made him desirous to find some means of acquitting himself of this debt, to which end he asked the Doctor for his address, and this it was which gave rise to the following conversation:

"My home is at M——," said the Doctor.

"At M——? I am not acquainted with the place, never having been there. Yet its name is a significant one to my ears. It was the birth-place of a cousin of mine; and that cousin, my dear Doctor, stepped in to deprive me of a large entailed property, after I had already been greeted as heir of the *majorat*. So strange are the vicissitudes of fortune of this world; but one must learn to make up one's mind to them."

"I think you must be mistaken, for I do not recollect the birth of any heir of a *majorat* at M——; although I have lived there thirty years, and it could not have happened without my knowledge, as I attend all the families there, and am acquainted with every soul in the town."

"So it was, nevertheless; although there certainly was no great facility afforded for ascertaining the particulars of the very important event of the birth of Baron Klas Malchus E—brand, for my uncle and aunt were at that time on a journey, and happened to be stopping at the little town of M—— when it took place.

"Aye!" exclaimed the Doctor, rubbing his forehead, "I do think I remember something of the kind; but E—brand was not the name."


"No, very true; my cousin has only lately assumed it, on inheriting the property from my grandfather. My uncle's name is X—."

"Just so; bless me, was that your cousin? I had not the slightest idea that it was the heir of a *majorat* that I had helped to bring into the world. I remember the whole story as distinctly as if it happened yesterday; but there was a rare mystery made about it."

"A mystery, was there? I suppose my uncle was afraid that my father would spy out the exact moment of my cousin's birth as minutely as he himself did that of mine. The two fathers must have been kept in a fearful state of anxiety and suspense, for the *majorat* was to devolve upon the one of us two, who should first come into the world."

"No, really!" said the Doctor laughing, "it must have been run pretty close. I perfectly remember the night of the 29th of August, 18—. How long after was it that you were born?"

"I was born one day later than Klas Malchus," replied Richard, turning pale. He meant one day later than the date of his cousin's birth, *according to the register*; but he did not know whether he could venture to ask the meaning of



the Doctor's contradictory statement of dates, for although he fully believed it to be a mere mistake, some secret feeling prevented him from openly expressing his astonishment; after complaining of the pain in his arm, he resumed with affected indifference: "so it was on the night of the 29th of August that he was born."

"No," replied the Doctor, "I am not quite correct there. It was on the night between the 29th and 30th; but as the birth took place, to the best of my recollection, at about half-past two in the morning, it in fact occurred on the 30th: I have got the date written down."

The pain in Richard's arm became more intolerable; the Doctor urged him to hasten his departure for Mörkedal, where he would be well taken care of, and so they parted.

It will be readily understood that the worthy Doctor had not the slightest suspicion of having violated his oath of secrecy, by conversing on this subject with the Lieutenant, the latter having been the first to relate to him the history of his cousin's birth at M——. For many days after, the Doctor thought with regret of the amiable and attractive young man, who had been deprived by the aid of his skill of so vast an inheritance; but his attention was soon claimed by other matters, for he was at that time engaged in a scientific journey to Copenhagen and Germany, and so he

soon lost sight of the episode of his earlier practice, which had been so unexpectedly recalled to his recollection, suffering it quietly to subside to rest amidst the host of records preserved in the depths of his secret soul.

Not so, Richard. We have already witnessed the struggle between his warm young heart and his reason, which strove to see its way clearly in this dark mystery. But such light could not be obtained without consequent exposure; and Richard dreaded the changes and convulsions that must inevitably ensue—more especially for the sake of his adored Isabel. For the Colonel, whom he now regarded with the profoundest contempt, he felt no pity. But then there was the upright, true-hearted Klas Malchus, who would have joyfully resigned the *majorat*, could he but have preserved his name untarnished; and for him, for the unhappy Baroness Eugénie, but above all for Isabel, Richard's heart bled. Isabel, whose life already hung upon so frail a thread, what might the consequences be to her! And could he, who aspired to win her love, her hand, contemplate bringing an action against her father, of which the issue must be so uncertain; for Richard was well aware that were there no evidence forthcoming but that of the Doctor, the cause must be lost; and he would only have succeeded in causing a great sensation, and brand-



ing his uncle's name with an accusation which it would be equally out of his power to verify or to remove. Under such circumstances a union with Isabel would be out of the question. But on the other hand, it was torture not only to suspect, but to become every day more convinced by the effect of the allusions he addressed to his aunt, that he had himself the best founded claims to the possession of the very property upon which his uncle had given him the situation of agent. We have endeavoured in the preceding narrative to show how Richard was alternately swayed by the conflicting pleadings of his love, and of the natural ambition which urged him to assert his right to a possession which would not only secure his future prospects, and give him an advantageous position in society, but would also afford him the opportunity of effectually contributing to promote the future welfare of his young brothers.

Amid the tumult of these contending feelings his love acquired a strength and vehemence almost alarming; his whole life depended upon Isabel—for her he could sacrifice everything.

And now, after this rapid retrospect of the secret annals of Tyringsholm, we will again turn the page, and follow the *new* heir of the *majorat* through the remaining phases of his career.

CHAPTER VI.

IT is not our intention to linger over the wearisome details of the law-suit, which, as every one well knew, could lead to but one conclusion. Leaving them to be conducted in due form by the Major, as prosecutor, on the part of his son, and by a skilful advocate on that of Klas Malchus, we will return to Tyringsholm, the common rendezvous both of the winning and losing party.

The Colonel has of course the first claim upon our attention. Is it to be supposed that a man whose whole life had been devoted to externals, to the contemplation of himself in the mirror of the world's opinion, to securing a reputation for uprightness, liberality, popularity—in short for all the virtues of which he neither possessed, nor cared to possess, the substance, who in his arrogant selfishness looked upon himself as the centre of all

interest, the model of all perfection—is it to be supposed, we repeat, that such a man could survive such a fall? could live to see his cherished name branded by justice and sullied by universal contempt? No it could not be: to live on under such circumstances would have required greater courage, greater self-denial, higher principles, than the Colonel had ever possessed.

It seemed as if no resource remained to him but to die, and accordingly the Colonel did not live to behold another sun. At the moment that his shattered nerves gave way, that, livid and motionless, as if suddenly turned to a stone, he had leant for support against the mantel-piece, his brain sustained the electric shock which deadens the faculties for ever. The immediate cause of death however, according to Dr. Manning, was a suffusion of water on the brain.

Let us not turn away in a spirit of condemnation too severe, from the bed on which are stretched the lifeless remains of the man, who in his life-time had been so puffed up with pride and vanity. Had not the prospect of wealth and consequence exposed him to so fearful a temptation, Colonel X—— would most probably have gone through life as one of those harmless, commonplace people, of whom there are so many thousands in the world, all of whom probably bear about within them the seeds of evil, which fail to

germinate only for lack of opportunity; some few there are who manfully struggle against their temptations, and come forth victorious from the conflict; but many others there are who would succumb if the enemy did but assail them on their weak point. Happy they who are enabled to control their own passions! Let us not presume to judge those who fail to do so, but rather take home to ourselves the solemn lesson afforded by a death-bed, from which the victim of unbridled passions is suddenly summoned to appear before the judgment-seat of the Almighty.

Colonel X—— was neither a good husband nor a good father in the true sense of the word, for his very affection was vanity; nevertheless, forgiving and appeasing love watched over his last hours, and prayers, more fervent and earnest than he could himself frame, arose in his behalf to the throne of God—let us hope that those prayers were not unheard.

Baroness Eugénie wore her widow's weeds with the deepest dejection. A dreary gloom had long overshadowed her life, but so far as it was possible



for a person under her circumstances to recover any degree of peace of mind, that was now restored to her by the certainty that Tyringsholm would revert to its lawful possessor. The thought of the pity and contempt with which her children must regard her weakness was more bitter to her than the loss of her husband. She even thanked God that he had been spared the torture of witnessing his own infamy. It was better as it was; for she cherished an inward conviction that he had died repentant, deriving it from many circumstances of his last hours, and this belief it was that calmed and comforted her.

Nothing could exceed the respectful tenderness of Richard's attentions to his unfortunate aunt, and when Baroness Eugénie perceived the unaffected and anxious delicacy with which he sought to avert from her everything that might excite a painful recollection, she felt her heart filled with a degree of tenderness and gratitude towards him beyond the power of language to express; and when he took her hand in his, and gazed with mournful sympathy upon her wasted features, she would rest her head upon his bosom, and find there a more secure and peaceful refuge than on that of her own children.

A moment of unspeakable bitterness to her was that in which she was compelled to confess herself an accomplice of her husband's crime. Her

deposition was not taken in the court of justice, but in her own apartment, yet the act was of itself sufficient completely to crush her already overburdened spirit. Her statement was, however, clearly and fully given, with every detail concerning the day of Klas Malchus's birth, the journey, and the circumstances by which it was marked. When she concluded, there was no one present who did not feel the sincerest pity for the unhappy woman, who, in order to shield the name of her husband from infamy, had herself endured one-and-twenty years of lingering misery.

The state of Klas Malchus was, however, far more deplorable. Ever since the fearful discovery, and the almost immediately subsequent death of his father, he had wandered about his own apartments like a spectre. He neither spoke, nor complained; sought neither to afford nor to receive consolation. In his silent brooding he seemed to have forgotten that one source of happiness yet remained to him. He did not even seek access to Mary; his whole being was shaken to its foundations; his piano remained untouched, and all day and nearly all night, he paced up and down his room with slow and measured steps. He was, indeed, brought to join the family at meals, but it was evident that this was a purely mechanical act, for he never asked for anything, nor did he appear to perceive any difference when once or

twice, by the advice of the doctor, they omitted to summon him to table.

The misery of seeing her beloved son reduced to this condition, and feeling that it was by her own act, since by daring to withstand the criminal entreaties of her husband, she might have spared him all this suffering, was the heaviest trial of all to the Baroness. All knew Baron Klas too well not to be persuaded that the loss of Tyringsholm would, regarded as a mere question of property, be a positive relief to him, but the resumption of a name dishonoured by his father's crime and his mother's weakness—the recollection of his father's fearful end, and the consciousness of being himself an object of general observation, could not fail to produce upon a character, by nature so gloomy, an impression deeper, perhaps, than it would be in the power of time to efface, and it was not without reason that they trembled for his intellects.

“Klas, my own Klas!” would poor Baroness Eugénie often say, as she clasped his hands within her own, “will you never again look kindly upon me? Will you never be able to forgive your unhappy mother?”

A silent, assenting movement of the head, and an effort to smile, was all the answer she received.

“Not one word, Klas! not one?”

"What word?" would he repeat slowly, "What would you have me say? Do not torment me!"

Deep sighs burst from the Baroness's bosom: "Oh, Klas! Klas!"

"Let it rest—it cannot be helped!" this was all she could extract from him, and none of those who endeavoured to rouse him to speak, received any other than this monotonous answer, "Let it rest, it cannot be helped!"

One day the Doctor, who had been informed by Richard, of Klas's engagement to Mary, proposed that she should be summoned to his presence. It was hoped that this measure might produce favourable results. No one was to be present, but Richard and the Doctor awaited the issue concealed in the adjoining room. Mary, who assuredly was not the person who suffered least from these complicated calamities, was very thankful in the midst of her sorrow for the happiness of being permitted to see him. She softly entered his room, and paused at the door.

Klas Malchus, who was, as usual, pacing the room, had his back towards her as she entered, but when he turned, his eyes fell upon her, as, timid and trembling, with tears upon her cheeks, she stood gazing upon him.

"Are you here, Mary?" said Klas; but there was neither warmth nor animation in his tone.

At this chilling address, for which Mary could not account, she began to weep bitterly.

"Oh, Klas! am not *I* innocent of all that has happened?" said she, advancing towards him.

"Yes, surely; but let it rest, it cannot be helped."

"Oh, Klas! dearest Klas! do you then no longer love me?" and in her despair, Mary flung her arms around him who had formerly clasped her so lovingly in his: "No, no, I see that you do so no longer—they have changed your heart, they have turned it away from me!"

"Yes Mary, they have changed my heart—I am no longer what I was."

But his voice was more gentle, his glance milder, and Mary gathered hope.

"Let me sit beside you Klas, you are ill; I can see that plainly: in the height of summer you are as cold as ice." She led him to the sofa, sat down beside him, and gazed upon him with mournful tenderness; "yes, you are far more ill than they had told me!"

"Do not talk so much, Mary!" said Klas, but he drew her nearer to him and laid her head upon his bosom, as he had often done before, "hush now—it is a good thing to be silent!"

And Mary spoke no more, but wept quietly; she began to comprehend the nature of the evil that

was to be apprehended for Klas, and unspeakably earnest were her prayers that she might be the chosen instrument to withdraw his spirit from the dark abyss, on the brink of which it was hovering.

As she rose to depart, he said softly : " do not leave me, I can breathe more freely when you are near me, but when you go I feel the dead weight return."

"She must remain with him," said the Doctor to the Baroness, who, forgetting all her former pride, clasped Mary to her heart, saying, " You must remain with us, my child, and if you succeed in saving my poor Klas, you will have saved your husband."

After this Mary remained in constant attendance upon Klas ; it devolved upon her to think of, and do everything that was required for his comfort, for as yet he expressed no other wish than to have her near him.

One day she ventured to open the piano; and this time, instead of preventing her as usual with a look of displeasure, he even encouraged her by an almost imperceptible gesture of approval. Thereupon, inspired by a feeling of joyful hope, she played and sang one of his favourite songs: the tones of the instrument, blending with her voice, penetrated his soul, and loosed the icy fetters in which it was bound. He listened with eager attention, while the tears streamed down his pale


and wasted cheeks; trembling with hope and fear, Mary rose from the piano, he stretched out his arms, she sprang towards him,—there was warmth and returning life in his embrace.

From this day forward the most sanguine hopes were entertained of his recovery: fervent was the gratitude of Baroness Eugénie to Him who has the power to send a ray of light into the deepest abyss of misery. If Klas Malchus's reason had given way under this shock—she dared not pursue the thought, but she blessed God who had enabled her once more to feel the solace of hope, of which for so many bitter years she had been deprived.

We must now, however, devote a few words to another mother, to the kind, cheerful, amiable Baroness Ebba, who neither lost her consciousness nor her presence of mind, on receiving the stunning intelligence of what had taken place at Tyringsholm. She instantly sent off an express for her husband, who procured leave of absence, and returned more rapidly than he had departed. They were both now at Tyringsholm, comforting and advising like an affectionate brother and sister, and true friends in need. The funeral of the Colonel was conducted with all the pomp and ceremony which he had so loved in his lifetime; and this was very feasible, as it was not till after the interment, that the cause of his death became known: nothing could exceed the delicacy, the

forgiving kindness exhibited in the conduct of Baroness Ebba to her unfortunate sister. Not a word or an allusion was ever suffered to escape her, which could wound the feelings of Eugénie; and though of course it was but natural to presume that in her tête-à-tête conversations with her husband, Ebba thanked God that all had been brought to light, and that her dear Richard's future prospects were so brilliant, yet no feeling of the sort was ever suffered to transpire. It was not Ebba alone by whom this praiseworthy delicacy was displayed, for the worthy Major treated his relations with far more respectful consideration now, than he had ever before shown them.

It was clear that the L——s were far from feeling unqualified pleasure at the turn that affairs had taken. The sufferings of the Baroness, so clearly expressed in her countenance, were a continual source of sorrow to them. And the apparently hopeless mental condition of Klas Malchus lay like a leaden weight upon their hearts. But there was more than this to trouble them. Their own son Richard, the rightful heir of the *majorat*, did not show the slightest pleasure at the prospect of becoming lord of the stately domain of Tyringsholm. He appeared as sad, as dejected, as ever. All his thoughts seemed to be for others, not one for himself. "Alas!" sighed his mother, "he is not happy!" and she was right; he was, indeed, not



happy. He who in the eyes of others appeared so singularly fortunate, did not himself enjoy one moment's peace. Gloomy forebodings had taken possession of his soul, yet he was obliged to keep them under control, and as far as possible to conceal them; for there were exertions required of him which at times almost exceeded his powers; and only one other human being, besides his mother, understood how much he was suffering while compelled to accept the unwelcome and extravagant congratulations heaped upon him by those who sought by this means to please and flatter him.


Often at night would Richard leave his sleepless bed, (which, in order to keep a constant watch over Klas Malchus, he had caused to be removed into the room adjoining his,) and would go forth to seek refreshment in the open air. His noiseless wanderings were always directed towards the left wing; whence he would return more agitated and fevered than before. He would look into Klas Malchus's sleeping apartment, and if he found him, as was usually the case, like a restless spirit, continuing his monotonous walk up and down without ceasing, a shudder of horror would pass over him. Then all his attention would be devoted to his unhappy friend, in soothing whose sufferings he strove to forget his own. He would not leave Klas until he had persuaded him to go to bed, and had seen him fall asleep; then only

would he again seek his own couch, when exhaustion would procure him an interval of repose; for at Tyringsholm all was now dark and gloomy; and darkest of all was the lustre of Isabel's eyes.

We have left Isabel till the last,—it is time that we think of her.

The fearful evening which rent away the mysterious veil that had hitherto concealed the secret of her mother's gloom, and revealed to her the dark page in her parents' early life,—that same evening snapped many a fibre of the slender thread which still bound Isabel to life.

She evinced the utmost fortitude in her attendance on the death-bed of her father. She neither fainted nor gave way to lamentations, but with outward calmness and composure received and executed all the doctor's directions. Her care soothed the dying moments of the Colonel—her prayers arose to Heaven for him—her lips whispered in his ear words unheard by any but himself, and in her arms he breathed his last. When her father was no more, she devoted herself to her mother and brother; and when her attendance was not required by them, she lent her active assistance to her aunt, in making the necessary arrangements for the mourning. But, calm and tranquil as was the surface, yet her inward sufferings were severe. Deeply was she wounded by the dishonour which her father had entailed upon



all those who bore his name. It gnawed at her proud heart like a canker ; but her very pride gave her strength to bear the burden of unmerited suffering, and to repel, with a dignity upon which no one ventured to infringe, every allusion to the past—every expression of condolence. No one, not even her nearest relations, could attain to any great degree of confidential intimacy with Isabel, and her mother, in spite of the gratitude she felt towards her for her unwearied exertions, yet experienced far more relief and comfort in weeping out her misery on Richard's bosom.

It was not easy to define the relative position of Richard and Isabel at this period. She now perceived that he had long suspected his claim to the *majorat*, and had abstained from asserting it for her sake alone. She, moreover, knew him too thoroughly, not to be aware that a position in society which should afford a wider field for the exercise of his powers, must have been a strong temptation to him, and that many a sharp conflict must have been waged between his love and his ambition, before he could compel the latter to silence.

The contemplation of this sacrifice, which revealed to her at once the full extent of his love, and of his anxiety on her account, awoke a new and yet more painful struggle in Isabel's heart. She thought her doubts had been laid to rest for

ever; but now they arose again with redoubled force, to question the justice and expediency of her views.

Had not Richard's whole course of conduct plainly proved that there was for him but one source of happiness on earth: and was it, indeed, kindness on her part to withhold it from him?—would it be for his eventual good?

We know that Isabel had always held the creed—whether true or false we pretend not to say—that no noble and lofty spirit could for ever cherish an unrequited love. She, therefore, deemed that she had proposed to herself a worthy object in striving to lead him through present and transitory suffering to a brighter future, undimmed by the bitter memories of a blighted youth. For what else could he expect from a union with her? Should she unveil to him her inmost heart—would he not there behold a depth of passion equal to his own? and what would be the consequence? A dream of ecstasy, indeed, but a dream from which he would be awakened by—death. And then—— Isabel shrank with anguish from the contemplation of Richard as her widowed husband, so young and so beloved—left alone with his bleeding heart, and calling upon her in vain; and she—even in the grave, even in Heaven itself, would not that voice reach her ears? When she suffered her imagination to dwell upon this extreme at once of hap-

piness and misery, the possibility of her living long enough to be united to him—then she felt that to die would be too bitter. But her sentence had gone forth, she knew that she *must* die, and that it would therefore be madness, impious madness, to bind herself by ties so strong to the blessedness of life.

Poor Isabel! how can human feelings wring the heart!

“But is it, indeed, kindness on my part to close the gates of this earthly paradise against him—will it be for his lasting happiness?” Such was the question which she repeated to herself, now that Richard’s noble self-sacrifice had excited her feelings towards him to the highest pitch, while at the same time, ever since the fearful hours she had passed by the death-bed of her father, she felt but too plainly how, in the sleepless hours of night, death hovered over her pillow, and pressed his icy kisses more and more closely upon her living lips.

Poor Isabel! how can human weakness wring the heart!

Before Dr. Manning quitted Tyringsholm, which (owing to the distressing state of health of the Baroness and of Klas Malchus) was not until after the funeral, Isabel requested to see him in private. The interview lasted long. Dr. Manning was a skilful physician, and a benevolent and kind-hearted man; and when, at the end of two hours,

he quitted Isabel's apartments, there was a mist before his eyes, which no wiping of his spectacles could remove—but in Isabel's heart there was deep and deadly anguish, for she knew that henceforward she must dream of no compromise with life.


CHAPTER VII.

A MONTH had passed away—a long month, amid all the beauty of summer—a sad and weary month, despite the radiance of the air and the gladness of the earth. Isabel's pavilion, which had so long been deserted, was now once more open; and there, on one of those soft and still July evenings, which exert so soothing an influence upon the heart, we find her sitting on her sofa, with her work-table beside her, and upon it a vase filled with her favourite flowers, which had been placed there by Richard before she came down.

Mary is seated on a chair not far from Isabel, and from her timid, down-cast looks, and blushing cheeks, we may conclude with tolerable certainty that she is for the first time Isabel's companion. The beauty of both was faultless, though very

different in character. There was nothing in Mary's manner which could be properly characterized as humble; it was a sort of dove-like timidity, which accorded well with her delicate features, her deep blue eyes, and the low, sweet tones of her voice.

In Isabel's eyes, on the contrary, as well as in her whole appearance and deportment, there was something commanding. Her pure and classical features, undistorted by any shadow of affectation, resembled the *chef-d'œuvre* of one of the great masters of antiquity. But our heroine had another advantage, which may indeed be to a certain degree acquired in society, or before the mirror, but can never be attained in perfection where it has not been implanted by nature, namely, grace. This quality, which can make ugliness pleasing, and the absence of which can deface even beauty, was possessed by Isabel in the highest degree. Her slightest movement was graceful, because it was unstudied, and bore only the impress of her natural dignity. At the moment of which we are now speaking, Isabel was busied with her flowers, Mary with some needlework, while the crimson rays of the evening sun poured in upon them through the dome. The doors were partly open to admit the refreshing breeze that rose from the stream.



"How do you get on, Mary? Do you think you think you can succeed in copying the pattern?" asked Isabel, holding out her hand for Mary's work. Mary rose and gave it to her with a look of doubt.

"Very well done, indeed! You really seem to have a genius for everything. Virginie herself could not have embroidered this tracery better."

Mary answered only by a pleased and grateful smile; but she was naturally shy, and the honour of sitting with her future sister-in-law was evidently rather oppressive to her. She felt much more at home with Virginie, in whose company there was nothing to remind her so emphatically of the difference between a baron's daughter and the sacristan's Mary. Yet nothing could be more kind and friendly than Isabel had been to her, and during the past week she had begun to give her instructions in embroidering, which Mary had never before had occasion to learn.

"You said that Klas Malchus had gone out with Richard; the walk will do him good, I have no doubt."

"I think it will. The Lieutenant has always some useful suggestion to offer, and no one can conceive how kind and patient he is with the Baron." Mary always spoke of her lover by that title when in the company of others.

"Very true, Mary; Richard has had a great deal of patience with Klas. It would be hard to say which of you two has shown the most."

"Oh, but my case is quite different," said Mary, blushing; "besides, Lieutenant Richard does not even get rest at night; he sometimes walks about out of doors, and sometimes sits with the Baron and talks to him till he goes to sleep. Baron Klas told me so himself."


Isabel made no answer, but bowed her head lower over the flowers, and although Mary, now that she had once begun to talk, would gladly have added something more about the Lieutenant, whose melancholy she took much to heart, she did not venture to do so without encouragement, and therefore continued her work in silence.

"Do you not think, Mary, that it is getting rather cool? There is a strong breeze from the stream."

"Perhaps you would like me to shut the doors, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes, do shut one of them, if you please;—but, Mary, you must not be so punctilious with your perpetual Mademoiselle—call me Isabel."

"Oh, no, Mademoiselle; I could not think of calling you by your Christian name. I should never be able; that is quite out of the question. I remember how difficult I found it to call the Baron, Klas, and even now I can never do so



except when we are quite alone ; and that was easy, compared to treating you with such familiarity."

" You little simpleton ! What will you do when we are sisters-in-law ?"

" If that should ever be !" replied Mary, with beaming eyes. " I shall never be able to address you otherwise than as I do now."

" But it was only yesterday that I heard you call Virginie by her name ?"

" Yes,—I really do not know how it escaped me. She begged me to do so ; but I shall never get into the habit of it ; and then——but here comes the Lieutenant along the terrace. He has got quite a fresh colour,—that is the consequence of his walk, for he almost always looks pale now."

A slight sigh parted Isabel's lips as she busied herself with her flowers. Her heart beat fast at the sound of his approaching footsteps, but she recovered herself and looked up.

Richard was at her side.

" Klas desired me to give his love to you. He felt very much revived by his walk ; but the first thing he did on his return was to ask for Mary."

" Then perhaps I had better go to him ?" said Mary, quickly laying aside her work, with an enquiring glance at Isabel.

" Yes ; I will remain with Mademoiselle von

X——,” said the Lieutenant, and without asking leave he closed the door after Mary.

It was the first time since the Colonel's death that Richard and Isabel had been alone together. She was the first to break silence.

“Virginie has stayed long at Tjällstorp. She promised to be back early.”

“Yes ; but as yet it would be too early,” replied he, almost timidly, as he watched with anxiety the fleeting colour on his cousin's cheek. “Oh, Isabel, is it possible that you indeed seek to avoid being alone with me ? I might have had frequent opportunities of seeing and speaking to you as now, but you always secure yourself a companion. You do not know how bitter a thought it is to me that these unhappy changes, which I have had no share in bringing about, may have prejudiced you against me. We have become almost strangers to each other,” and he drew his chair close to her sofa.

“No, Richard, we are not become strangers to each other ; but ——”

“But—but what ? No, do not look so intently at those flowers or I shall become jealous of them ; your eyes rest upon every thing, upon every body, rather than upon me.”

“Richard,” said Isabel, gently, “you must not be surprised that I have avoided you, for I knew well that the first moment we were alone our

conversation would not fail to turn upon agitating topics. Your great, your noble self-abnegation, was not without its motive; you cannot believe me ungrateful, even though I have avoided you."

"Self-abnegation, gratitude," repeated Richard in a tone of deep and wounded feeling, "those are but cold unmeaning words between you and me; I fear they may be even worse—a cloak to conceal that which lies behind them. The anticipation of this interview was then painful to you?"

"Yes—I will not conceal from you that it was."

"Oh God!" exclaimed Richard, casting down his beautiful and now flashing eyes, "how insanely I have deceived myself! But no, Isabel, this was not always your feeling—you did not always shrink from meeting me. What is the reason of this change?"

"You misunderstand me, Richard."

"Do I? God grant it may be so. Well then, look kindly upon me as you used to do," and quickly rising from his chair, he took up his favourite position on the stool at her feet. "Dear, dear Isabel, say those words again; say that I have misunderstood you."

"Yes, dear Richard, I repeat it, you misunderstand me; to be with you, to talk with you quietly and confidentially is to me a great pleasure, as it always has been and always will be. But

when I think of all the struggles you have encountered for my sake—of all the temptations which for my sake only, and for that of my peace, you have resisted, then my dear, generous, cousin, then indeed it becomes painful to me to meet you,—and yet I am very proud of you!”

A faint glow passed over Richard’s expressive countenance. “What should I live for, Isabel, if not for your peace? Would Tydingsholm, with all its splendours, afford me any compensation for the loss of even a few days of your precious life? But now, indeed, my very soul is troubled, for all my struggles have been in vain. The thunderbolt has fallen, and even you are not unscathed; you cannot conceal it from me. This *majorat* is an accursed thing; it requires double for all it gives.”

“No, do not say so; things must take their course with me whatever may betide. Think of the future, Richard; think how you will raise the name of your family—how you will adorn your station, which you are certainly far better adapted to fill than our good Klas Malchus. Wealth will be of use to you, for it will furnish you with the means of serving your fellow-creatures, and of carrying out the projects of future exertion, which you have so often formed. Oh, Richard, it is matter of great rejoicing to me to think how you will be spoken of as a man of distinguished merit; one

who has deserved the blessings of his dependents; one, who adhering inflexibly to his principles, desires and strives after that which is right and noble, despite the flatteries and temptations of the world; and values his own conscience and his self-respect, far beyond the applause of others. This is what the future reveals to me concerning you; is not the path that lies before you a noble and a bright one? God be thanked that he has given to man so many great and worthy objects to fill his heart, and to aid him in surmounting the obstacles and difficulties which obstruct his passage towards the goal."

"You have drawn a brilliant picture, Isabel, but tell me, who is to rejoice in my success?"

"Yourself, your family, and your country for which you will work. The matured dreams of manhood are not those of youth, yet I think that, indifferent as they now appear, they will one day be dear to you. You are ambitious, and ambition is a noble impulse, when it does not degenerate, which, in your case, it will not do."

"But when all this comes to pass," resumed Richard, in a tone of deep earnestness, as he raised his eyes to hers, "where will you be, Isabel? Why are you silent concerning yourself?"

"I am not silent concerning myself—for do I not tell you, Richard, how the anticipation of your future excellence fills me with pride and joy?"

He shook his head mournfully. "My dreams of ambition, brilliant as they are, are too feeble to outlive the ruins of another still fairer and nobler dream. It is only in conjunction with it that they can attain their full development, and I feel that under this joint influence, my powers would be redoubled, and that none of your hopes would be disappointed. But if I cannot obtain the realization of my brightest dream—then, Isabel, cast yours aside also; they are but faint and dim compared with mine!"

Richard ceased, but his eyes were eloquent, though his lips were silent. In Isabel's heart there was a desperate struggle. She longed to say to him "behold the truth, and then venture to complain!" but she was silent, for amidst all the strong temptations that assailed her, the power of her strong will still retained the mastery. She wished that Richard should take courage to receive the sentence of his fate, and yet, when she believed him about to do so, her soul was filled with a sorrowful and trembling presentiment that such a step must be the prelude to their separation.

"Isabel!"

"Richard!"

"Your voice falters—in this, at least, I am not deceived. Isabel, have you not tortured me long enough? May I not ask——?"

"Ask what you will, Richard!" Her voice

trembled no longer—the fortitude of despair was in these decisive words.

“But, if you look at me thus, I have not courage to ask. Tell me, Isabel, my only love! is it fear that induces you to give me death instead of life?”

Richard’s imploring eyes met those of Isabel, which sought to avoid them, but yet revealed that which her lips would not confess.

The cup of joy was between them, filled to the brim, but it remained untouched : neither of them might taste the intoxicating draught.

“If my dreams have been too presumptuous, Isabel, tell me so at once ; for I cannot trust the language of your eyes.”

“Richard, my poor Richard, your dreams have indeed been too presumptuous. Have you forgotten the stern rival whom I once revealed to you?”

“He will yield to my prayers ; or, if he will not yield, let him take us both together. But let us not speak of what is still so far, so very far distant. There is something nearer at hand—happiness, the purest, brightest happiness, if you, my own beloved Isabel, do not reject me. Do it not ; do not repulse my love. Life will then be fairer than it has ever yet appeared to us—so fair, so bright, that you will be unable to leave it, unless I am with you in death, as in life.”

There was a passionate fervour in Richard’s en-

thusiasm, which had the effect of completely restoring Isabel's self-possession. She felt that the moment was decisive, that the fate of both, his future prospects, her peace in the hour of death, hung upon one fragile thread. But Isabel's strong spirit would not have wrestled in vain : though her tortured heart writhed in agony, that heart must submit. After a few moments of painful silence, during which Richard had watched the variations of her countenance with intense anxiety, Isabel raised her head, and her voice, though low, was clear and calm, as she replied:—

“ Richard, I know but too well how warm and disinterested is your affection, and it would be falsehood were my lips to deny, what my conduct has revealed, that I value your love. Yes, dear Richard, I do value it, and yet not as you would have me to do. You love me deeply, with a burning, passionate, love—while I, (and, oh, with what anguish did the untruth avenge itself,) I am not capable of such intensity of affection, and it gives me pain to behold in you a vehemence of feeling, compared to which mine is but lukewarm, or even cold. Your affection for me, such as it formerly was, calm, tranquil, and easily satisfied, was precious to me ; that I could witness and accept without disquietude. But now it is

changed—for now you require that which I will not—that which I *cannot* give.”

It was terrible to watch the workings of Richard’s countenance as his hopes gradually sank, and at length forsook him altogether, giving place to a misery, compared with which all his former suffering seemed light. In return for his devotion her feelings towards him were but “lukewarm” and “cold!”


His face was pale as death; but even in this trying hour he had sufficient power over himself to think of her peace, of her bodily weakness, and of the consideration it claimed. He bowed his head in silence, suppressing every outburst of passion that might have distressed her; for he knew that she loved him well enough to suffer with him. There was something unspeakably touching in the self-denying affection which, even in this bitter moment, thought of her rather than of himself. Isabel fully appreciated it, and loved him but the more for the fortitude which he showed, and which exceeded all her hopes.

When Richard was able to command his voice, he said quietly, and without any expression of bitterness: “I have heard your sentence, Isabel, and if I still remain at your feet instead of giving way to despair, it is because I will not purchase one moment’s alleviation of my sufferings at

the price of giving pain to you. You see now that I can command myself, and, therefore, I entreat you to listen to me without interruption. I swear that what I have now to say is dictated rather by disinterested affection, than by the blind passion which shall trouble you no more in future, so far as I am able to prevent it."

"Speak, dear Richard; I will not interrupt you."

"Although I am unacquainted either with the nature or with the degree of your sufferings, yet I have learnt from Doctor Manning how fragile is the thread which binds you to existence. I would not speak to you on this subject before, nor did I venture to do so, for hitherto I had cherished the hope that my love would prevent your thoughts from reverting to that from which I believed it desirable that they should be withdrawn. But now I must speak, and speak unreservedly. I am dear to you, I know, not indeed as you are to me, but still sufficiently so to make my presence not unwelcome to you. Well then, Isabel, I will be content with very little. I only ask you to grant me the right of watching over you; and who could do so as I can? When your sufferings increase, when the mask which your lofty spirit has assumed because it cannot endure pity, must be laid aside, who then could tend you, understand you, suffer with you, as I could? No one; no one else. Upon



my bosom you might weep when no other eye beheld you, for we should be one, and never should you be disquieted by the vehemence of my passion. I will suppress it with all my might; I will be calm, gentle, cheerful, ever thing which can solace and support you. I will travel with you to distant climates, which, without a protector, you cannot seek. Oh, Isabel! give me this right—give me the name of husband, and in the midst of my sorrow, I shall look upon myself as blessed, since I and I only shall watch over you!”

“Richard, you will kill me!” murmured Isabel faintly, and unable longer to control the physical pangs which had for some minutes past been added to the anguish of her mind, she burst into a flood of tears, and overcome by the violence of her sufferings, sank down into his arms.

For one moment only he clasped her to his agitated breast, then laid her gently upon the sofa, and kneeling beside her, wiping the tears from her pale cheeks,—he conjured her now, in this dark hour, to tell him all. Then Isabel took his hand and laid it upon her heart, uttering a few words in a tone softer than the whispering of the breeze on a calm summer night. But they rung with painful distinctness on the ear of Richard, and at every word his head sank lower upon his bosom, while heavy sighs relieved the anguish of his soul.

"Take courage, my dear Richard!" It was now her turn to strive to comfort him—hers, who now, for the first time, endured before his eyes that physical agony, compared to which all mental suffering is but light.

"Yes, Isabel, I will take courage for your sake, that I may not be unworthy of you. But this is too terrible; and you deem that you can suffer alone. Tell me, do you not believe that at this moment I suffer as much as yourself."

"Yes, I see that you do; but now you must render me a service, that has never yet been rendered me by any one excepting my poor aunt, who knew all." She hastily unfastened a riband from her neck. "Here, take this key, open the left hand drawer, and give me the little phial containing the dark-coloured liquid—make haste, Richard!"

Richard made the utmost possible haste to administer the sedative; he addressed her in soothing and gentle words, while within his own heart all was black as night—a night which was destined to become darker still.

It was long before the paroxysm passed away; but the sun had set some time before she rose, and whispered to Richard who had supported her till then, "Thank you, thank you, I am well again now; let us go home."

"Well?" repeated Richard, sadly, "yes, for the

present perhaps ; but now, dearest Isabel, have pity upon us both. You have need of my affection, even if you cannot return it ; and I have need, in order to endure life, of the privilege of being with you and watching over you. Do not then resist any longer, do not look so gloomily upon me. Oh ! Isabel, be my wife ; you know how I love you—do not leave me to despair.”

“No, Richard,” said Isabel firmly, “you must cease these entreaties, for I cannot, I must not listen to them. I shall never be your wife, but neither shall I be the wife of any other. Let us speak no more on this subject.”

“Isabel, you are more cruel than death itself. Death even would grant me a few years of happiness, you will not grant me one moment of it ; and you are no less cruel towards yourself, in suffering your proud spirit to leave you to your own unassisted strength. This is selfish of you, Isabel, you are all-sufficient to yourself, and I am nothing to you.”


“Do not say that, Richard, for it is unjust ; you are, and will ever be, my best and dearest friend, to whom I shall always turn with implicit confidence ; but more than this you cannot be. You know, dear Richard, you know that I am not infirm of purpose, and believe me I shall never change.”

No word of complaint or lamentation passed

Richard's lips ; but his changing colour and trembling limbs testified his emotion : without uttering a word he opened the doors of the pavilion, and Isabel hastened forth past him as hurriedly as if she were escaping from a den of torture, but as she paused upon the bridge and looked round, there was an expression on her countenance, which, had he seen it, might have shown him that it was from a paradise that she was tearing herself away.

Richard stood absorbed in thought, leaning against the door-post. "Do not stay out long," cried Isabel to him, as she ascended the steps to the terrace ; but he did not hear her, and as she again looked round, she heard him close the door.

It was almost dusk in the pavilion, but that twilight was the glare of noonday, compared to the darkness which had fallen upon Richard's soul. His most anxious wish had been fulfilled, he had been admitted to the inmost recesses of Isabel's heart. He had penetrated into the brilliant cloud ; but, alas, it was brilliant only on the exterior—within there was nothing but chill, impenetrable mists. And what were his feelings now that he had attained the goal which fancy had so often pictured to him glowing with the brightest hues, and where he now found nothing but disappointment and despair ? Such feelings are beyond the power of description.



In the midst of this tempest of emotion, there was yet one faint and struggling ray of light. It was not that of hope—he had none left now; but it arose from the feeling that there was some satisfaction in being the best and dearest friend of such a woman. When he thought upon his high-souled Isabel passing through life with such calm, patient, tranquil dignity, understood by him alone, while not even her nearest relations had a suspicion of the burden which was laid upon her; and compared her to the languishing, consumptive heroines who think to make themselves interesting by their sufferings and lamentations: then in the midst of his disappointed hopes he felt that she was indeed far removed above the rest of her kind, and that in the certainty of being dear to her, there was a degree of happiness however melancholy.

But such a consolation, opposed to the intensity of passion, is but feeble and transitory; the storm resumes its sway, and it is one which has the power of blighting all the buds of happiness, however various in their kind, which have once borne so fair a promise.

And thus ended the golden dream of Richard's youth.

At the age of one-and-twenty—at the very moment when fortune was heaping upon him all her remaining favours—he stood there, satiated

and wearied, without a future, without ambition, without hope ! These words had no meaning now for him ; in one day he had exhausted them all ; and to-morrow—and to-morrow—and to-morrow—what was to become of him !

“No,” said he at length, “I cannot remain here ; I am not able at present to be any comfort to her.”

CHAPTER VIII.

LESS surprise than regret was occasioned at Tjällstorp by Richard's announcement, respectfully but firmly made, of his determination to leave Tyringsholm, and go abroad until the suit were brought to a conclusion, or perhaps for even a time longer. No one inquired into the reason of this; they knew it but too well; and the Major thought it was quite as expedient that he should stay away until everything were settled; for although there was no doubt that Tyringsholm would eventually devolve upon Richard, yet for the present it belonged no more to him than to Klas Malchus, owing to certain necessary formalities which must always run their tedious course; and before these were despatched, the Major had no doubt that he would have recovered himself, and be ready to return.


The Major was, moreover, much occupied with the approaching migration of the family. It was from no selfish impatience that he desired to hasten it, but he would have been glad that "the others" should be fairly gone before Richard's return; for he would never be happy there, while living in daily intercourse with the woman whom he loved, and could not win. Both the Major and his wife were, moreover, not a little displeased with Isabel, who, as they could not but guess, had now refused Richard, after treating him formerly with such marked distinction as to lead every one to look upon them as engaged.

"But, upon my soul, I do think," said the Major, when he was alone with his wife, "that he might be considered a sufficiently good match even for her Highness."

"Of that, of course, there can be no doubt!" replied Baroness Ebba, with a slight touch of pride; "but Isabel is not easy to fathom: a hundred times I have felt persuaded that she really loved Richard with her whole heart, and as often, again, I have been compelled to believe myself mistaken."

"She is probably too proud to care for any one but herself," replied the Major, who had a genius for working himself up into a passion.

"No, my dear, you must not be unjust. You may be sure that I am quite as angry with her as



you can be, for sending away my poor boy with a breaking heart, which would certainly never have been the case, had she from the first withheld all hope; but I must acknowledge that she is the most fascinating woman I ever met with; and I am sure she is not selfish. She has her caprices, it is true, but her character is an admirable one in the main; and it is my firm conviction that, as she will not consent to be Richard's wife, she will live and die unmarried. But how is one to account for such fancies? She is very peculiar, with all her fascinations;—that no one can deny."

The news of the Lieutenant's intended journey was not long in reaching Tyringsholm, although he had not himself had courage to announce it there.

Isabel had long endeavoured to familiarize herself with the idea of an event which she considered so probable; and yet her self-control had nearly forsaken her, when she learnt it, without the slightest preparation, from Virginie. She, however, made an effort to ask what time he had fixed for his departure.

"He means to set out about the end of the week, as soon as we are a little more settled. Oh, Isabel," added Virginie, unable to restrain her tears, which were evidently called forth by a slight degree of irritation, as well as sorrow, "how different everything has turned out from what we


had hoped! You must not take it amiss, if I cannot help saying, that I think you have not acted rightly towards Richard."

"Not acted rightly towards him!" repeated Isabel; while the slight flush upon her cheek showed her to be somewhat offended by Virginie's frankness.

"Yes, I mean what I say," continued Virginie, provoked by Isabel's rather dignified manner. "It seems to me that Richard made no attempt to conceal his affection for you. Every one might have seen it; and, Isabel, you saw it too, and did not repulse it;—on the contrary, you gave him all the encouragement in your power, both on the journey to Mörkedal, and during our visit there."

"Really, my dear Virginie," said Isabel, calmly, "you must be very inexperienced in the signs of love, if you could imagine that my uniform and sincere friendship for Richard could have been intended to encourage him in the way you imagine. I did not suppose that anybody would accuse me of this."

"It probably arises, then, from my ignorance of the precise limits between friendship and love; but, if I am not mistaken, there are many besides myself who have been deceived by your behaviour to Richard. Be that as it may, however, dear Isabel, you cannot deny that you were aware of Richard's feelings, for *you* cannot be so inexperienced as to



have believed that his unremitting attentions to you were only the result of friendship."

"No, there you are right, Virginie. I was aware of Richard's feelings; but you ought to perceive that, had I wished to encourage him, I should scarcely have done it so very openly. Perhaps I ought to have shown a greater degree of reserve; but I thought that the unrestrained frankness of my manner would afford the most convincing proof, both to Richard and to those most interested in him, that no closer tie could subsist between us. Having given you this explanation, which I trust will satisfy your sense of justice, I have only to add, that the subject is altogether so distressing to me that I must entreat you never to revert to it."

Virginie remained silent for a few minutes, then flung her arms affectionately round her cousin, exclaiming:—

"Forgive me, dear Isabel, forgive me my harsh and thoughtless words. I see clearly that I was wrong; for the more I reflect upon the subject the more my own feelings prove to me that had you really loved Richard, you would not have displayed your preference thus openly. Dear Isabel, pray try to forget what I have said. But you know how I love Richard; and he would certainly be little gratified to know that I had spoken in such a manner to his idol."

"He shall never know it, dear," replied Isabel, whose colour went and came rapidly while she listened to the warm expression of Virginie's feelings; "never, dearest Virginie." She drew her cousin closer to her, "But do you not believe that I, too, shall be conscious of a sad blank at Tyringsholm? I have scarcely courage to think of it; for I, too, love him dearly!"

"Yes, but, my dear incomprehensible Isabel, if that is the case, why will you not marry him?"

Isabel shook her head. "There is a great difference, dear Virginie, between loving as a friend and brother, or as a husband."

"Yes, that is true, but——" and Virginie concluded the sentence with a sigh.

On that same evening Baron Klas was sitting alone in his room. He had heard of Richard's intended journey; and, perhaps, because no one else had thought of asking him whether he intended to carry his own interrupted project into execution, he came to think of it for himself. It seemed as if a light gradually broke upon his darkened mind; and his thoughts were distinct and clear as he reflected upon the past, the present, and the future. Deep and earnest as they were, he was no longer confused and bewildered by them. His disposition was now, perhaps, more gloomy and depressed than ever; but at the same time he felt a longing to fling aside his old

burden, and to sun himself in the warm beams of household love.

A feeling of natural delicacy, however, prevented him from thinking of the fulfilment of this wish so soon after the death of his father, and the painful occurrences connected with it. He also desired first, as far as possible, to recover the tone of his mind; and this he thought could best be effected by his removal from the scenes that must so constantly remind him of past calamities. When his mother and Isabel should have left Tyringsholm he purposed to return, and seek out for himself some unpretending abode, large enough to satisfy the limited wishes of Mary and himself. In such a home he hoped to attain greater happiness than he had ever hitherto enjoyed; and to forget all the unhappy events which had succeeded the evening upon which he had asked his father's consent to his marriage.

As Klas Malchus's thoughts reverted to that evening, it seemed as if the dark image of the Colonel threatened once more to shake the balance of his mind. But he had now strength enough to dismiss the idea by a vigorous effort. And, as further and decisive proof that he was aware of his danger, and anxious to avert it, he rang the bell with as much impatience as if he feared his resolution might fail him before he had taken the proper means to carry it out. The servant entered

with a countenance expressive of no small degree of astonishment ; for he had had an easy time of it of late, it being long since the Baron had given any similar signs of life.

“ Is the Lieutenant in his room ? ”

“ No, Sir ; I saw him just now on his way to the stables. He was probably going out riding.”

“ Well, run and see ; and if he is not yet gone, beg him to come hither as soon as possible.”

While this order was being executed, Klas Malchus paced up and down the room with unusually rapid strides. “ Yes,” said he to himself “ it must be done. I feel I must breathe some other air than that of Tyringsholm, which would long since have destroyed me had not my good angel been at my side. But why should Richard leave it ? ” It was the first time that he had asked himself this question ; and before he could answer it, the Lieutenant stood before him in his riding dress.”

“ What is it that you want, dear Klas ? ”

“ First tell me whether you are in a hurry ; for, if you are, I will not detain you.”

“ No, there is no great hurry ; I was only going over to Tjällstorp, to hasten my mother’s preparations a little. If they will not be quick, I shall set out without a fresh supply of linen. After all, it is a thing that one can get anywhere.”

“ And why are you in such a desperate hurry to

go? But I see how it is; I need not ask. And o she has rejected that true and loving heart? Ah! all women are alike who have had what is called a refined education—cold, proud, capricious, and heartless. Thrice happy do I account myself never to have turned my eyes on such dazzling but worthless tinsel. But, Richard, I am rejoiced to see that you can behave like a man. You lock your misery within your own bosom, and therefore I honour you as you deserve; and if you choose to have me for your travelling companion, I will go with you!" Klas Malchus held out his hand, which was warmly grasped by Richard.

"Thank you, Klas, thank you! There is nothing I desire more than that we should travel together. You, too, require change of scene for a time, and you will then return with more cheerful and happy feelings to her who is to share your future lot. I shall not return so soon, for there will be no one to wait for me."


Klas Malchus made no answer, but extended his arms to Richard, and the two friends clasped each other in a long embrace. Their feelings, however, were very different. Klas felt as if he were awaking from a long and dreary torpor; Richard, as if he were sinking into it, although he strove to avoid all appearance of the kind. He exerted himself to the uttermost, in order to prove to Isabel that he could endure this bitter suffering

manfully; and that he could even bear to be separated from her rather than grieve her by the sight of his melancholy countenance constantly before her eyes.

Klas Malchus's friendly suggestion and sincere sympathy were a gleam of light amidst his sorrow. His grief at the thought that the ill-fated estate might have been too dearly purchased, should the circumstances connected with its loss cost Klas Malchus that which nothing can ever replace, had weighed heavily upon his soul. But from this care Richard was now freed; and the impression made upon him by his cousin's affectionate embrace was so deep as, for a time, to divert his thoughts from more painful subjects.

"Klas Malchus," exclaimed he, with that genuine warmth of feeling which can only spring up in a spirit as unselfish as that of Richard, "I have not shed a tear over my own fate, but now that the very pressure of your hand assures me that my worst fears are at an end, I cannot help weeping for joy, and thanking God, with my whole soul, that he has relieved me from the burden which weighed most heavily upon my mind."

"I understand you, my generous, true-hearted cousin," replied Klas, in a low voice; "and believe me I have myself thanked God no less fervently. But now let us prepare to set out on our journey as soon as possible."



"But before we go," suggested Richard in a tone of earnest entreaty, "you must strive to speak a few words of cheering kindness to your mother. Dear Klas, promise me that you will. It has often made my heart bleed to witness the consuming anguish of her remorse. You must remember that her one fault sprang from a too intense affection for her husband, and that is a feeling which we surely have no right to censure, even should it degenerate into weakness."

"I will certainly speak to her, Richard, you may depend upon that; and do not fear that I would hurt her feelings, although I cannot designate her criminal acquiescence by so mild a name as you do. To you, Richard, and to you only, I must say it—I do not think my affection for her can ever again be what it once was. Oh! if she would but have given me her confidence!—if you only knew how often I have implored it!"

"Do not judge her so severely, Klas; she was a wife and a mother, and she was human. Believe me, she has amply and bitterly expiated a fault which originated only in weakness. You must spare her, Klas."

"Do you think I would do otherwise? Say no more, you may depend upon me. My poor, poor mother! she shall not lie down to-night before I have done my utmost to give her peace."

"And you will speak kindly and affectionately

to Isabel, too, will you not? You do not know how good she has been to Mary."

"Yes, I have heard that, and shall thank her for it; but I cannot love her since she has deceived you thus."

"For heaven's sake, Klas, do not speak so harshly. She has not deceived me. No, it was I who deceived myself by clinging to my delusion, in spite of the secret presentiment which would have warned me that it was unfounded. She has always been the same to me—frank, cordial, and affectionate as a sister—she has never changed."

Richard uttered these words with a vehemence which showed how much he had it at heart that Isabel should be clear in the eyes of all. Still nothing could shake his conviction that of late her tenderness for him had exceeded that of a sister; but this was only his own private belief, which no one else was to suspect.

"I did sometimes think, however, that it was otherwise," said Klas Malchus; "but probably I was mistaken, for in that case she would not have rejected her own happiness—happiness such as she will never find with any other man."

In this respect Richard was alike free from fear and jealousy; the heart that had been refused to him would be given to no other; of that he was certain; but how, with such deep and strong feelings,

she could remain unmoved by the power of love, was to him a mystery.

Evening was already stealing on before the Lieutenant left Klas Malchus; he rode to Tjällstorp nevertheless, for he could find ease nowhere, and wandered restlessly backwards and forwards between these his two homes. Isabel watched him from the window. Alone with her deep sorrow, but supported by the soothing consciousness of having triumphed over a great temptation, she sat there with her proud head bowed, listening to the whispering of the wind in the summits of the lime trees, and thinking, with a kind of tranquil satisfaction, how much might probably be changed before those lime trees should be again adorned with the bridal green of summer. In Isabel's heart reigned that calm which follows upon a step of great and decisive import; but in its lowest depths the storms of passion existed still, bound indeed, but unsubdued; the form of their conqueror was still shrouded in darkness.

Let us now cast a glance into the sleeping apartment of Baroness Eugénie.

The soft twilight of the summer night reigned within the room, giving it an appearance of peace which existed not within the bosom of its occupant. The Baroness stood before an open writing-

desk, bending over a picture which represented the Colonel in the days of his early youth. The longer she contemplated the features, once so dear to her, the more rapid became her breathing, and the more she felt oppressed by the sort of mysterious awe which seems like a consciousness of the presence of a departed spirit. This feeling carried her back to the long vanished spring-time of her life, when she was still young, innocent, and happy.

But what had followed upon this brief dream of sunshine? She durst not answer the mournful question; the image in the frame seemed to wax in size under her trembling hands, and to gaze upon her, now with the bright smile of early days—and then rigid, gloomy, and menacing, as in later years.

Poor Eugénie! days and nights of darkness, full of tears and pangs of conscience, had followed upon this transient dream, and perhaps the worst was yet to come, in the uncertain future of Klas Malchus—she did not dare to give language to her dread forebodings. The reason of the son alienated by the crime of the parents—for such a calamity there was no consolation: it was a punishment exceeding even the wildest visions of her imagination.

As even in this hour of excited feeling the thought came over her, she hastily thrust back

the picture into its case, with a sort of despairing horror—for was not all this misery his work? But Eugénie's character was not one which could long hold fast one idea, and scarcely had she turned from the picture when her conscience smote her for another cause. Perhaps he was even then looking down beseechingly upon her, and needing her forgiveness, in order to obtain repose. She would, she must think of him only in charity and in love, and with tears of penitence she again drew forth the picture, which now appeared to gaze upon her with an expression of profound peace.


Baroness Eugénie von X—— was a very weak woman, and if she was consistent in anything it was in her weakness, which sprang from a deficiency, very common in the female character, namely, that of true energy; it is a quality frequently attributed to woman on extraordinary occasions, but a display of strength only called forth by the exigency of the moment, or by great excitement of the feelings, is but transitory, and does not deserve the name. A strength of another kind, such as we have striven to depict in the character of Isabel, is sometimes innate; it may be fettered by education, but develops itself so soon as the individual is free to act for herself. It is however a very rare quality, much more so than is usually believed; that which women com-

monly possess in a high degree is art, and therefore it is comparatively easy for them to assume various characters, of which perhaps they sometimes scarcely know themselves which is their real one.

But let us return to Baroness Eugénie, who possessed neither energy nor art, but was one of those sensitive, pliant beings whose nature it is to be moulded by others, and whose character and happiness mainly depend upon the gentleness or harshness with which this office is performed. She was still standing before the open desk, occupied with the thoughts which we have sought to pourtray, when she suddenly felt two arms thrown around her, which clasped her to a warm and throbbing heart.

A cry of terror which had nearly escaped her lips was transformed into a sigh of rapture, when she perceived that it was Klas Malchus, by whom she was thus embraced, and that with a look, which before a word had passed between them, satisfied her that the fearful spell was broken, and that however much he might suffer from the calamity which had fallen upon him, he was yet able to bear it. Long did they remain clasped in each other's arms, and poor Eugénie's heart thrilled with the blissful consciousness that her son had forgiven her.

"No, this is no illusion," whispered she, as she



laid her soft hand affectionately upon his forehead "you have come, to give your poor mother a twofold consolation."

"I am come, dearest mother, to beg your pardon with my whole heart for the suffering I have involuntarily added to that which you already had to bear! I am come to say, let the past sleep in peace! We have still enough left to enable us to live much more happily than we have done during this last memorable year. Yet even when the surface is calm, the depths below are not always equally unmoved. That is my case at present, but I wish not to continue, and therefore I have determined to accompany Richard on his journey, since for me absence and change of scene, will be the most effectual remedies."

The Baroness sighed. "Then I am to lose my son at the very moment that I have recovered him?"

"No dear mother, do not call that losing me; it is rather regaining me; for with God's help I hope to return sound in mind and body: and this could not be if I remained at Tyringsholm."

"Perhaps you are right, my Klas, and I wish that I too could leave my old home and seek to forget it. But we must not hurt Richard's feelings by doing so; he has earnestly pressed me to remain here at least until his return—and then, where we shall go to, will depend very much upon Isabel.


Hitherto she has not made the most distant allusion to the subject. I almost think she prefers remaining at Tyringsholm."

"Would to God she liked it well enough to share it with its possessor; then we might have looked forward to some happiness. And Richard has deserved better treatment at her hands; that good, excellent Richard!"

"Yes Klas, you may well say that—my heart has often bled for him; and he has been to me of late, an angel of comfort. You can never know how delicate, kind, and generous, he has been—but you may believe me, when I tell you that, but for his affection and unremitting attention, I should never have gone through this awful trial as I have done. I always comforted myself with the thought that Isabel would repay him for everything, but Isabel is scarcely like a woman. I have often of late, had occasion to admire her strength of mind and calmness, but——"

"But what, mother? We are now speaking quite openly, and I am glad to learn any particulars concerning Isabel."

"Well then, dear Klas, I was going to say—that gifted as she is, and notwithstanding all her attention to me which was everything that I could wish, there is yet something about her which does not altogether please me. I always had too much feeling—or rather, for I am fully conscious of it,



I was too weak—but heaven knows whether Isabel has any feeling at all, or *can* share in the weakness of others. She fulfils every duty to the uttermost, yet in her fulfilment of them, there is no genial warmth. I think it is to be regretted for her own sake; for with all her beauty and wealth and pride, I doubt her ever finding real happiness.”

“That is precisely what I fear; but she has a strong spirit, a something within her which makes up for the want of closer ties—and in all other things she is so right-minded, and has so much judgment and good feeling, that I can leave you, dearest mother, to her care, with the most implicit confidence.”

“That you assuredly may; and indeed I should be very ungrateful, if I did not acknowledge that her behaviour to me has been exemplary. I am persuaded that she loves me, and will not separate from me. And indeed it would be a heavy trial to me, to part with her, for if I could only forgive her for disappointing my hopes with regard to Richard, I could be as happy with her, as under our unfortunate circumstances is possible. But Richard’s sorrow cuts me to the heart—I cannot forget that.”

“He is a man, and has shown himself such,” said Klas, soothingly; “but there is another subject, and one very dear to me, upon which I

wanted to speak to you—I mean Mary. What a happy thought it was of yours, to let her come hither. Under Providence it is she whom we have to thank, for the restoration of my health and faculties. You have been very kind to her, dear mother,—continue to be so I entreat—look upon her whilst I am away as a beloved daughter, and you shall always find in me the most grateful and affectionate of sons.”

“Indeed, dear Klas, that is a thing which you had no need to ask; now that he has been removed whom I was compelled to obey, and that everything is so changed, I am most willing to bid her welcome as my daughter. Her modest, unassuming demeanour and her unremitting care of you, have quite conquered my prejudice against her birth; and if you wish it, and her parents give their consent, she shall remain with us during your absence.”

“That is the very thing I was going to beg of you, dear mother. Not that I wish her to acquire the manners of the world; for it is precisely her innocence and simplicity that have so endeared her to me that I would not see them altered at any price. But it would make me so happy to think that she who is destined to be my wife, already held the position of a daughter with regard to my dearest mother. You will then speak of me, and pray for me, together;

and this common affection will be a closer and more sacred tie between you, than it could ever have been, if my choice had fallen upon a young woman of my own rank. Not one in a thousand would have stood the trial which has fallen upon me. Mary was not ashamed of it. She thought only of her love—and in more than the common acceptance of the word, would gladly give her life for my peace. And such, dearest mother, such is the love that I desire. None other could make me happy.”


Baroness Eugénie laid her hand in that of her son. Since he was happy, she was so too; yet, even at that moment, she would have been glad could she have transformed her future daughter-in-law into a young lady of noble birth. But the days of her pride were over now; and it would ill have beseemed her to have uttered a word that resembled it. She therefore abstained; and spoke not a syllable that could trouble the joy of Klas Malchus, who, as he left his mother's room, felt as happy as if he could now, for the first time, call Mary his own.

CHAPTER IX.

THE travelling carriage was at the door. The family from Tjällstorp had come to Tyringsholm, in order together to take leave and lament the departure of the travellers. The moment of separation was at hand, and weighed painfully upon the hearts of all.

A feeling of deep happiness mingled with Mary's sorrow, as she stood beside Klas Malchus, supported by his arm. He had that morning presented her to the whole assembled family as his affianced bride, and had placed a plain gold ring upon her finger; hence the joy which contended with her grief, as she looked confidently into Klas's face, and sought to derive comfort from his eyes.

"You must show yourself strong now, my own dear little Mary," said Klas, in a low and




affectionate tone. "You know it is owing to you that I am able to undertake this journey, from which I hope to derive great benefit and therefore I am sure that you wish me to do so, and will reconcile yourself to the necessity of it."

"But you will be sure to write to me?—letters for myself alone, which no one else is to see?"

"Thank you, dearest, for this jealous eagerness. You shall receive abundance of letters, which you must keep to yourself, and in which my whole heart shall be unfolded before you. But you, too, must write me long letters—you must tell me all your own feelings, you must forget none!"

Thus they conversed together, happy in that they might frankly utter their feelings—and soothe the pain of parting by anticipations so precious to loving hearts. How different was it with the two pale beings who stood together at the window of the red boudoir!

Since the last decisive evening in the pavilion, Isabel had not had any further conversation with Richard—scarcely had her eye met his. Even now she would have avoided a meeting so painfully agitating—but what would her relations have thought? What conclusions would they have drawn? Such a step might have betrayed her secret, and with a heart almost breaking with the effort to conceal its real feelings, she went up



stairs to take her share in the leave-taking, which neither was, nor could be, to any one else what it was to her, who might perhaps never see again one at least of those to whom she was now to bid farewell.

Her bosom was torn more violently than ever by the stormy passions which had once more burst their bonds; and where should she find strength to endure these last moments of anguish in which an inward voice unceasingly repeated to her:—Engrave his image in the depths of your heart, for those loving eyes—that kind, sweet smile, you will never see again. That voice which has spoken to you words of such deep tenderness, which has so often soothed your sufferings, and allayed the fever of your mind—you will never hear it more. No! no! it cannot be—do not forsake me! Let me die upon your bosom!

Such were the thoughts struggling within her, as she gathered her last remaining strength, and, with head erect and cheek deadly pale, stood leaning against the curtains.

His heart throbbed even more tumultuously than hers, but he was determined to control himself, as he came towards her and gently laid his hand upon her shoulder. Both started at the expression of each other's faces—for it was almost ghastly. Isabel's glance was the first to fall; she could not endure to look upon the change that

had come over Richard. She did not reflect that she was herself no less altered.

"Isabel," said Richard—not in the low tender tones of former days, but in a voice both firm and clear—"I thank you for this emotion. It proves to me that I have been dear to you!"

She would gladly have made some reply, but she could not—her head was bowed still lower, and only the motion of her lips showed that she had understood his words.

"Merciful heaven!" continued Richard, fixing upon her a long keen glance of enquiry, "I know not whether it be insane presumption, yet at this moment it appears to me as if I were more to you than you are perhaps yourself aware! Dearest Isabel, it is not even yet too late! If a feeling, which you shrink from acknowledging, should have been for the first time awakened in your heart by the prospect of separation, I implore you, as you value your life and happiness as well as mine, let nothing deter you from confessing it! One half word from your lips—one glance of encouragement, and I will stay. You cannot spare me! Isabel, say that you cannot!" and he pressed her hand passionately to his lips.

"Yes, Richard—yes," replied Isabel, in broken sentences, and in a tone rendered unnatural by the effort that the words cost her—"I can spare you—I must spare you!"

"You need not Isabel—I will remain here, even without the slightest hope, if it gives you pain to see me go. I need not tell you that I decided upon my journey less for my own sake than for yours. For me it would always be happiness to see you and to be near you, even although some bitterness might be mingled with it. But I feared it would be too much for you to see me pining away before your eyes, for if I too can control my spirit—I have not like you power over my body also."

"You have acted well and rightly for both of us Richard, and now—do not prolong this torture."

"I will not trouble you long, Isabel! only let me gaze upon you for a few minutes.—It is but a small favour; one which you would refuse to no one—and which I shall not enjoy again for a long time: for what should I seek here, since you reject me?"

Richard's power of self control was exhausted, his breast heaved, scalding tears rolled over his cheeks, his whole frame quivered with the intensity of his emotion.

Isabel's head sunk lower upon her bosom—but we have no right to lift the veil with which even to the last moment her proud heart strove to conceal its wound.

"Farewell then, Isabel; yet in this one thing hear me—choose no other dwelling than Tyrings-

holm!—let me at least have the comfort of finding you here—if I return!”

“Yes, living or dead, you shall find me at Tydingsholm!—May God be with you!”

And Richard remembered her words—“do not prolong this torture.”

“Take care of yourself—the utmost care of yourself—that is my last and most earnest entreaty! and should you ever wish to have me near you, write only one line. . . . but that one line I know you will not write. Isabel, Isabel, I leave my heart, my life, with you—something you must give me in return!” and he clasped her passionately in his arms; his kisses burned upon her cheeks, her head swam round, she knew not whether with happiness or misery; but in the midst of this whirl of excited feeling she had still strength for one last decisive act, and forcibly extricating herself from the arms of Richard, she hastened into the inner room, bolting the door behind her.


A few minutes after, the travelling carriage rolled through the ancient portals of Tydingsholm. The sound struck upon Isabel’s ear as painfully as the first stroke of the hammer which closes the coffin of a beloved husband strikes upon that of his widowed wife.

CHAPTER X.

IT is not our intention to trace Isabel's struggles day by day—to watch the gradual progress of the disease that was wearing away her life-strings. We know how physical suffering asserts its right, silently preparing the way for death.

For the present, therefore, we will only mention that immediately after the departure of Richard and Klas Malchus, Isabel and her mother, taking Mary with them, set out on their intended journey to Copenhagen; and while Tydingsholm is thus deserted, we will turn to the more cheerful scenes that await us at Tjällstorp.

It was a warm afternoon in August, two days after the departure of the ladies. The Major had not yet ended his after-dinner nap, Baroness Ebba had just begun her first letter to Richard, and



Virginie, with a fly flapper in her hand, was giving chase to these summer tormentors in the saloon, when the sound of approaching carriage wheels was heard; carefully opening a crack of the door, Virginie obtained a view, both of the hall and of the court-yard beyond, in which a small and elegant carriage, drawn by a handsome horse, drew up at that moment, while from the carriage descended a gentleman whom Virginie must have recognized, but did not choose to step forward and welcome. She hastily closed the door, turned in evident dismay to the looking-glass, and perceiving that her hair was in disorder, and her collar awry, determined while the gentleman was speaking to the servant, to make a dart across the passage to her own room, which could be reached no other way. There was no time to hesitate, and taking the fly-flapper in one hand and a plate full of dead flies in the other, she cautiously opened the door, and was about to make the meditated spring, when, as ill-luck would have it, the gentleman turned round and gave a courteous greeting to the young lady, who stammered an apology, and disappeared.

The gentleman was no other than Count M——, who, after four months' absence, had lately returned to Svärdsö, and was now come to pay his first visit in the neighbourhood at Major L——'s.


"His excellency, Count M—— is here," said

the maid, opening the door of Baroness Ebba's room!

"No, is he? Then go and see that there is some good coffee ready!" Baroness Ebba awoke her husband, drew her scarf over her shoulders, cast a half glance at the looking glass, and opened the door of the drawing-room, where she received the esteemed and welcome guest with her usual graceful courtesy.

The Major, who was somewhat vexed at this unexpected interruption of his nap, was not so soon ready, for in the first place, he had forgotten to shave, and then his wife had whispered to him that he could not possibly receive Count M——, in his grey dressing-gown. "Lisa," cried he, "make haste, and bring me some warm water and my brown coat! How unlucky that I should have forgotten to shave!" A genuine country squire hates shaving as much as he loves his dressing-gown.

The first meeting between Baroness Ebba and the Count was somewhat constrained. So many remarkable things had occurred during his absence upon which it would be painful to dwell, but which, on the other hand, it would have been unnatural to pass over altogether in silence. They must be adverted to, but delicately and cautiously. The Count felt that it was incumbent upon him to introduce the topic, and he did it



with the tact that might have been expected of him. Congratulation or condolence would both have been equally out of place. He therefore began with the easy familiarity with which an intimate acquaintance touches on a well-known fact: "I was much surprised to hear of the two claimants having decided to travel together. In their position there is something as admirable as it is rare in this close friendship, which reflects the highest credit upon both of them. I hear that the Baroness and Mademoiselle von X—— have also left the country, and most unfortunately for me I did not arrive at Svärdsö until the day after their departure, as otherwise I should have had much pleasure in paying my respects to them." All that was necessary had now been said, and Baroness Ebba, much relieved, hastened to reply.

"But I hope you will not leave this neighbourhood before their return—the country will be very pleasant for some time to come."

"Yes, we have the pleasantest season of all before us," chimed in the Major, as he entered and welcomed his guest with a cordial shake of the hand, "no doubt you will wait till after harvest before you think of returning to Stockholm."

I shall not return there at all this year, my dear major, but mean to settle down very quietly at Svärdsö, where I hope to become so great a farmer as to aspire one day to obtain the order of Vasa.

I have always had a great taste for farming, but have hitherto had little leisure to devote to it; and in future, my highest ambition will be directed to stalled oxen and well-filled barns."

This jesting speech was however uttered in earnest; reasons, into which it is not necessary for us to enter, having induced the Count to abandon public life. This step had been meditated before his first visit to Svärdsö. Now it was decided upon, and he appeared content with his choice, although it seemed doubtful whether it were perfectly spontaneous, for it was whispered that mortified self-love had had some share in prompting his resignation of office.

The Major was still complimenting the Count upon so wise a determination, when Virginie, having effected the necessary improvements in her toilet, entered the room, followed by the servant with the coffee equipage.

"I have already had the pleasure of seeing Mademoiselle Virginie," said the Count, as he courteously hastened to assist her in spreading the snow white damask cloth.

"I hope you are quite well, Count?"

"Quite, I thank you; I need not ask *you* that question, as your looks render it quite superfluous."

"After such a rebuke," replied Virginie, "I see that I ought to have suppressed my own enquiry.

Indeed, I remember now to have somewhere read that people ought never to begin a conversation with questions about health or remarks on the weather. But such refinements must not be expected from country girls."

"You may be sure," retorted the Count, gaily, "that I shall in future economize my civil speeches if I do not find them better appreciated, and therefore, I will not say, as I otherwise might have done, that I never saw a young lady who did the honours of her coffee-table so gracefully."

"Your imagination must have become very lively of late. Meanwhile will you allow me to offer you another cup?"

"No more I thank you. As for my imagination. I do not think it ever took any very exalted flights, and, therefore, if your observation be correct, I can only attribute it to a momentary inspiration."

"The effect of the coffee?"

"Why not, since the coffee is poured out by Mademoiselle Virginie?"

Virginie was certainly right in her remark, whether it were the Count's anxiety to show that the refusal he had met with a few months before had not disturbed his peace of mind, or the pleasure of seeing Virginie again which had induced him to lay aside his usual gravity. We know that Virginie had always been a favourite with him,

and now she had no longer the disadvantage of being eclipsed by Isabel.

When the heat of the day had somewhat abated, the party strolled out into the garden. Baroness Ebba, recollecting that it was near post-time, suffered her affection for her son to prevail over her courtesy as hostess, and excused herself in order to finish her letter. A few minutes after, the bailiff from Tyringsholm came to speak to the Major, and thus Virginie was left alone to entertain her guest. She was just reflecting upon a suitable subject of conversation, when Count M—— surprised her by frankly asking whether it were true that Baron Klas Malchus was engaged to be married?

“Yes, it is quite true; the bride he has chosen is both amiable and beautiful, and, notwithstanding her inferior birth, will, I am sure, make him happy. Many people think the engagement will end in nothing, but I have a better opinion of Klas Malchus.”

“I entirely agree with you; if he has given his promise, he is not the man to break it. His love must be of the romantic kind?”

“I am not sure whether that is the case, but if it be, I trust the romance will last for life, for their mutual affection is grounded upon the great congeniality of their characters.”

“It rests, then, upon the most solid of all

foundations," said the Count gravely. "Such congeniality cannot be acquired, and will extend even beyond the grave. I perfectly understand such a choice in Baron Klas ; with his peculiar character, a wife who had not been moulded to the conventional forms of society, was better suited to him than any other. He will now have the pleasure of forming her himself; and, were not the comparison too hackneyed, I should say—but of course you remember the fable of Pygmalion?"

"Yes, but I do not think the comparison would be appropriate in this instance, for I assure you Mary is anything but a marble statue; she has both character and feeling; and although I believe they spend the most part of their time together in silence, yet they understand one another perfectly."

"The language of silence, when it originates in deep and strong feeling, is, perhaps, the most expressive of all, for when the heart speaks the tongue has no need of words. Unfortunately, however, I cannot say this from experience."

"Indeed?" replied Virginie, thoughtlessly, as she looked up with a smile, but the next moment blushed deeply as she reflected how foolish, not to say impertinent, such an allusion to his unsuccessful proposal to Isabel must appear to the Count.

"Indeed!" repeated the Count, with a look of astonishment.

“Yes, I thought—I only meant that probably in your youth—!” This was worse and worse. Now he would suppose she meant to insinuate that he was no longer of an age to think of such things, and of all the interpretations he could possibly put upon her words, this would have been the most unwelcome to her.

Count M—— looked at her for a moment, and then continued in a lower tone: “In my youth I was well acquainted with the language of passion, but not with that of the heart; and it is, perhaps, for that reason that I now find it difficult to learn; but since it is proved that every ten years produce in us a complete physical change, may we not hope that there may be also a moral change in progress, and one of improvement which may enable us to attain a higher step of the ladder which connects the future with the past? If it be true that even in advanced age we are liable to be assailed by passions which it is hard to quell, they may nevertheless tend to a beneficial result by giving occasion to strict self-examination, and thus leading us to the conclusion—which under the influence of youthful feelings we could never have reached—namely, that we have been mistaken, and that the object after which we strove would not, if obtained, have fulfilled the hopes which we had attached to it. This, you see, is the compensation to be derived from advancing years.”

Virginie's confusion was not diminished by the Count's speech, nor, above all, by its significant termination. But now the chief difficulty was how to answer him. She would have preferred saying nothing ; but the fear lest the Count should think her quite a simpleton prevailed over her embarrassment, and, after a moment's reflection, she replied :—

“ I should have thought, nevertheless, that the chief advantage of such experience would be to induce this necessary self-examination *before* the illusion was suffered to obtain so strong a hold over us. For you must confess that the compensation you mention would be very insufficient if we assume the case of a person obtaining the object of his desires, and not discovering his error until it was too late.”

“ I see,” replied the Count, kissing Virginie's hand, with a smile which showed him to be well pleased with this just observation, “ that my logic was not altogether sound ; and if I had not some consideration for your patience I should begin again from the beginning, in order to place my argument in another and a more convincing light. It must, however, always be a moral impossibility to calculate the consequences of even the most of our actions. When these consequences have arisen, it is then that we can examine, by the light of reason, whether they are not in some way benefi-

cial to us—and the advantage of our more elevated station on the ladder of life, consists in being able to extract the greatest amount of good from such results, whatever they may be.”

“ I understand,” said Virginie, gaily. “ That is a very wise and practical view of life ; with such principles failure or disappointment could never drive you to despair.”

“ No ; it might cause me suffering, but not despair.”

Count M—— became, after this, a frequent visitor at Tjällstorp.

He wished for the benefit of the Major's advice and experience in several matters connected with the management of his property, and therefore often requested his personal presence at Svärdsö. On such occasions the Count always asked leave to come with his own horses to fetch him, to which the Major readily agreed, in consideration of the frequency of these journeys ; but when the appointed day arrived, the Count did not make his appearance with the light one-horse carriage, but always brought the state coach, and then came no end of civilities and compliments ; and, however pressing Baroness Ebba's household affairs might be, both she and her daughter were compelled to be of the party to Svärdsö, where the Count would devote a good deal more of his atten-

tion to the ladies, than to the excellent advice of the Major.

On one of these occasions it happened, however, that Baroness Ebba had desired Virginie to stay at home, in order to superintend the flax-carding, and the Count's face grew very long when only his hostess appeared in the saloon with her things on, and declared herself quite ready to start.

"But where is your daughter?"

"She must stay at home to-day—for there is a good deal of business to be done which cannot be neglected."

"Oh! I must beg of you, as an especial favour," pleaded the Count, earnestly, "to let Mademoiselle Virginie be of the party. I have prepared a little surprise for her, a very trifling one it is true, but which I think would give her pleasure, and I shall be very much disappointed if you will not be persuaded to retract your order; unless indeed, it be Mademoiselle Virginie's own wish to remain at home."

"Oh, no!" said the Baroness, smiling, "I cannot give her credit for any remarkable taste for staying at home. It was only *my* wish that she should do so, and if you insist upon her being of the party, I must warn you beforehand, that the horses will have to wait at least an hour."

"They shall wait two hours if you like. I will

give orders for them to put up." But three-quarters of an hour had scarcely elapsed before Virginie made her appearance, bonnetted and shawled, and with a bright smile upon her face.


The Count advanced towards her: "Will you tell me honestly, whether your mamma had to use much persuasion in order to bring you."

"I can assure you, in all truth," replied she gaily, "that I tried my powers of persuasion upon mamma, this morning; and I am only now a little indignant to find yours so much more successful than mine!"

"You must not be displeased at that, for it could scarcely be otherwise; your pleadings were, doubtless, very lukewarm, while I was entreating a favour, to which I attached great importance; and as—"

"Are we not ready yet?" asked the Major, who had been for some time walking up and down the portico, and now opened the door rather impatiently.

We will not now pause to describe the visit to Svärdsö, and will only mention that the surprise intended for Virginie, appeared in the form of a pretty paroquet, a bird which she had never seen, though she had often wished to do so. Virginie was perfectly delighted, and had nearly suffered a cry of joy to escape her, as the parrot uttered her own name. The Count was obviously gratified




by the frank expression of her pleasure, and when in the evening, he handed the cage into the carriage to Virginie, he said, gaily: "I hope you will not let my little ambassadress forget her accomplishments. I have endeavoured to impress upon her my own views, namely, that diplomatic skill is evidenced less by the multitude of words, than by their choice; but the poor little bird is such a mere beginner that as yet she knows but one."

This somewhat significant jest brought a bright blush to the cheeks of Virginie, as it now, for the first time, occurred to her, that the parrot would not have been able to pronounce her name had it not been constantly repeated to it by the Count.

A few days after this, arrived the first anxiously expected letter from Richard, from which we will extract a few paragraphs:

"We are now in Berlin, my dearest mother; do not however expect an account of the impression it has produced upon me, for it has produced none. I have often heard it said, that travelling is the best means of restoring tone and elasticity to a wounded spirit. People insist that change of place, scene, and air, works miracles! What effect it may have upon others I cannot judge, but in order to produce any upon me it must change my nature and feelings, and bestow upon me a new being, from which memory should be




excluded. But this, no change of scene, no journeying, can effect, and therefore I cannot see anything in the same light that I should do under other circumstances; to me all surrounding objects are shrouded in the same uniform misty colouring; I am ever longing to move onward, and yet, having attained the desired point, I feel in it neither pleasure nor interest."

Here Richard's thoughts assumed a still more gloomy hue, as they reverted to past scenes, but suddenly rousing himself from the contemplation of them, he resumed:—

"Do not think, dearest mother, that I am going to play the part of a second Werter—far from it.] Though the process may be slow, I shall be myself again in time. I must tear myself from this visionary world, which enervates my character, and converts me into a miserable dreamer. I must recover my former animation and enjoyment of life. I must recall the glad courage of my boyish years, that by its aid, I may once more become my former self.

"I fear I may have distressed you, my dear, kind mother, yet I would entreat you not to grieve on my account. When my sorrow has worn itself out I shall return home. You will see me again, strong in health and in spirit, and joyous as in former days; then I shall again receive your caresses, our family circle will once



more be united, we shall be one in our wishes, our hopes, and our faith. The world has nothing to bestow equal to such a home as ours, and I trust one day to enjoy its peaceful happiness again. So, dearest mother, look cheerfully forward, and think that all will yet be well !

“ For our dear Klas I have no other fear than lest he should take root here for ever. He has made a new acquaintance, which so entirely absorbs him that not a trace is now to be perceived of the mental disquietude which alarmed us so much. He seems to have entirely forgotten the existence of Tyringsholm and of the law suit. Heaven knows whether even Mary’s image is not in some degree effaced ; and all this in consequence of his new friendship.

“ You will ask who can have had power to effect such a change ? It is an individual who might naturally be expected to have great attractions for Klas, namely, an old professor of the Berlin University, who so vividly reminds Klas of his learned friend at Upsala, that he almost imagines himself transported back again to the years of his student-life, which he has always regretted, and which I think he is inclined to resume in Berlin. We have hired a small apartment ; and Klas’s room has already so completely the appearance of belonging to a student, that one can hardly believe its occupant to be a

traveller, and there he sits with his good friend the Professor, who willingly unfolds to him all his stores of knowledge. It is easy to perceive by the increasing animation of Klas's countenance, that the main object and highest gratification of his life, consists in learned research. The host and his guest occasionally become involved in arguments and disputes, but these only serve to strengthen their intimacy.

"We frequently go to tea at the old Professor's, whose kind and friendly wife reminds me a little of my dear mother; and it is a pleasure to me to converse with her, while Klas Malchus and our host wander into regions whither my knowledge does not enable me to follow them, nor should I much care to do so. The old gentleman has, however, a great deal of originality, and I too, like to listen to the accounts he gives of the university, and to his descriptions of the different Professors, for he has a very clear and forcible manner of expressing his ideas.

"I yesterday asked Klas whether he was not beginning to think of the further prosecution of our travels. 'By no means,' replied he, 'I have not yet been able to attend the lectures of Professors G——, H——, and T——, and I cannot leave this place, Richard; I have never felt so happy since I left Upsala!'

“‘ But this is by no means the case with me, Klas.’

“‘ Well then, dear Richard, do you go on with your journey. You need have no further anxiety on my account; I am as happy and content as I can be.’

“‘ Yes, so happy, I think, as almost to forget Mary.’

“‘ No, that I could never do. I have, on the contrary, some thoughts of bringing her hither. We could live very comfortably in this room and yours, without being annoyed by the presence of other people; and I am sure this would be enough to satisfy Mary. But then there is my poor mother to be considered, and I fear I shall have to give up the plan, agreeable as it would be to me. But Richard, for the present I shall remain here.’

“‘ Heaven knows how long ‘for the present,’ may extend to; at any rate I cannot wait to see. I shall, therefore, continue my journey alone—Klas will not miss me. He is now quite in his element, and his hair has grown as long as ever again—but he may enjoy it without any fears from me. I have no inclination now to laugh at the little weaknesses of others; I have enough to do with my own, which are not little ones.

“‘ I had not intended to speak of Isabel—but

I cannot resist telling you how kindly and liberally she has behaved to Klas. He found a cheque to a considerable amount awaiting him here, together with a letter, written in terms of the most affectionate delicacy. She writes: 'you have the more reason to look upon my fortune as yours, since, in consequence of my determination never to marry, it must eventually become so.'

"Such an announcement, which many brothers would have hailed with delight, could not give pleasure to Klas; he was very glad of the cheque, nevertheless; for little as he cares for personal comfort or luxury, he yet spends a good deal of money, and this has been the case here. He goes the rounds of the booksellers' shops almost every day with his learned friend, and his collection of books is already so considerable, that it will give him no slight trouble to remove it from hence.

"Isabel is in Copenhagen, as I perceive from her letter.

"My intention is now to proceed to Switzerland. I long for a sight of the Alps, whose eternal snows will, I hope, have power to allay the fever of my blood."

The night after she received this letter, Baroness Ebba could sleep but little. She perceived that although Richard strove to appear calm, yet that his calmness was only feigned. Even this evident effort was, however, in some degree a comfort to

her, for it proved that he had not yielded himself up unresistingly to the influence of his passion. He wished to return to his former life—to recover his former happiness; and where there is energy to will, there is usually also power to execute. The good Baroness comforted herself with this reflection, although not reposing in it any very implicit confidence; and if her pillow was wet with tears, she yet experienced how under the influence of prayer the clouds dispersed, and the light once more appeared. Gradually her thoughts reverted from her favourite Richard to her beloved and only daughter. She reviewed in her own mind the last visit to Svärdsö, and then began to look forward to the future, where none but agreeable images met her gaze, and so absorbed did she become in these contemplations, that there was sunshine in the mother's heart, when, at length, her busy thoughts gave place to a light morning slumber.

Virginie stood in the saloon busying herself with her little favourite in the cage. "You darling little rogue, take that at once, and do not be so ungracious."

"You seem to be very fond of it already!"

said the Baroness, as she approached her. Her reflections during the night had given her an irresistible longing to sound her daughter on a certain subject. It would at any rate be as well to see her way a little in case the question should ever be brought forward seriously; for really, what had happened last time about the Chamberlain had been quite foolish. "You seem to be very fond of it?" repeated the Baroness, who thought the parrot would furnish a very favourable pretext for introducing the subject.

"Yes," replied Virginie, "it is such an amusing little pet."

"And how distinctly it pronounces your name. Its instructor must have had no slight trouble to render it so perfect in so short a time."

"It was very nice of the Count."

"Very nice; how can you use such a childish expression? Do you think it no more than very nice?"

"Very kind then, mamma, if you think that sounds better. But I do not think my little pet would be by any means slow in learning. I am going to teach it to say 'food,' and then he will be able to tell me when it is hungry; and it will be quite a pleasure to hear it say 'Virginie—food.'"

The Baroness felt inclined to blush for her daughter, this was really being too simple even

for a country girl. "My dear Virginie," said she, with a look expressive of some little astonishment, "I hope you understand that it would not be at all fitting that you should teach it the word 'food,' in connexion with that which the Count has taken so much pains to impress upon it."

It was now Virginie's turn to look astonished. "How so, mamma?"

This "how so?" required an answer which it was not easy to give; but the Baroness was never long embarrassed.

"If," said she, laying some emphasis upon her words, "a gentleman is observed to have the name of a young lady so frequently upon his lips—one—"

"One may be sure," interrupted Virginie, gaily, "that he does not bear it in his heart; for that of which the heart is full, does not find its way so readily to the lips."

"Well, my dear, I must say I think you are acting a little comedy with your mother; but joking apart, that of which the heart is full, may easily find its way to the lips, especially in solitude. Count M—— is a man of unquestionable merit; but suppose he should think, Virginie, that you too have your share of merit, what would you say to that?"

"I should say that it would be very kind of

mamma not to ask me such questions," replied Virginie, throwing her arms around her mother's neck, and giving her a kiss.

"No, no, you cannot escape me thus, Virginie, this is too important a matter to be treated as a joke; so now, to speak quite openly, I would not for the world that Count M—— should look upon our behaviour towards him as intended for encouragement, if on a further explanation he is to find himself deceived. It is therefore my opinion, that if you do not feel now, or think that you could feel the slightest preference for him, we ought not so readily to acquiesce in his evident wish for a closer intimacy, nor continue these constant visits to Svärdsö; but should endeavour with the utmost delicacy to draw back from such frequent intercourse."

"But mamma," said Virginie, thoughtfully, resting her chin upon her hand, "forgive me for saying so, but might not that seem a little absurd, since Count M—— has never shown any symptom, beyond such little civilities, of the sentiments which you impute to him?"

"My dear Virginie, you are answering my question by a second: I have no objection however to explain myself on this point, if you will first tell me what you have to say upon the other."


"Dear mamma, upon that I have nothing to

say," replied Virginie, with unwonted decision, "not one single word."

"Not one," replied her mother with a slight smile. "In that case I think we had better let things take their course."

Virginie turned away with a blush; while the Baroness, her mind filled with agreeable anticipations, went to attend to her household concerns. She knew very well what was meant when daughters answer "Nothing" to such maternal questionings. Meanwhile she was not ill pleased that her Virginie should have so skilfully evaded the difficulty of not betraying her feelings, which would have been too much for many girls. In whatever way the matter might end, nobody would now have any right to speculate as to how deeply they might or might not have been implicated.

So Count M—— continued his visits undisturbed, until the time approached for the return of Baroness Eugénie and Isabel; and Baroness Ebba, who thought that two months of constant intercourse between people who were already acquainted, ought to afford sufficient time for both to know their own minds, began to be uneasy at the delay. It was not that she feared the revival of the Count's preference for Isabel; but after her return, Virginie would be almost constantly at



Tyringsholm, and the Count could scarcely continue his attentions before the eyes of his former love.

But while the Baroness was making her reflections, the Count was also making his; and it would not, perhaps, be inappropriate to give a slight sketch of them here.


After Isabel's refusal, he had felt for a time both mortified and disappointed; and as, under such circumstances, it would not have been either agreeable or desirable that his intercourse with the Colonel's family should continue as usual, he quitted Svärdsö for some months. Had not his public career at this period come to a close, it is probable that ambition might have conquered his love, but now that path was closed against him. He did not care for travelling—having had so much of it already, that the idea of leaving his comforts and luxuries for the fatigue and inconvenience of even the easiest tour was distasteful to him. Added to this, was the agreeable vision he had conjured up of a home shared with a young, beautiful, and amiable wife, whose care and affection would afford, he thought, a just compensation for the toils and vexations of the past, and without whom his life in the country, where he proposed to settle, would be one of dreary monotony. His first attempt in this line had

ended in disappointment; but Count M—— was not a man to abandon the purpose of a life-time on account of one failure. His earlier years had afforded him no leisure for marrying; now he had nothing else to do, and marry he must, in order to be happy in his home.

What he would have liked best would have been to secure the hand of the beautiful Isabel; but, as this was not to be, he gradually began to look upon the whole affair in a more favourable light, and succeeded so well, that by the time he returned to Svärdsö he had persuaded himself that Isabel, with all her brilliancy, her powers of fascination, and even her high-bred refinement,—which was his weak point,—would probably not have suited him as a wife.


It is no pleasant thing to weigh the apathy of mature years against an unrequited affection; and before the Count returned home he had nearly decided upon another choice: for his memory recalled to him a very attractive being, whose good qualities were well known to him; and he began seriously to regret that he had not from the first turned his thoughts in that direction,—in which case he might, probably, have spared himself the mortification of a refusal.

The events which occurred at that period at Tyringsholm caused him somewhat to prolong his




stay at Stockholm; but no sooner did he learn that a certain degree of calm was re-established there, than he returned to Svärdsö, where, amongst other news, he learnt that Mademoiselle Virginie Von L—— had had a rich and noble admirer, whose proposals she had refused. The Count's calm preference for Virginie was considerably heightened by this intelligence. "If I had lost her"—thought he—then, indeed, it would have been a difficult matter to decide upon another choice. Moreover, he was much pleased to think that Virginie had not been ready to marry the very first man who offered himself. He might possibly have thought otherwise had his own suit preceded that of the Chamberlain.

The result of all these reflections was that, beginning with his first visit to Tjällstorp, the Count treated Virginie with a degree of attention which, combined with the frank kindliness of his manner, would, as he flattered himself, make his wishes sufficiently clear. At the same time, he wished to obtain some certainty of success before taking any decisive step; and all the little manœuvres that he made to attain this object gradually worked up his feelings to a degree of intensity to which his admiration for Isabel had never risen; and this was not unnatural when, as frequently happened, he compared Vir-



ginie's cordial good humour, her gentleness, and unpretending simplicity, with Isabel's lofty self-possession and tone of independence; qualities which are unquestionably less becoming in a woman than those of Virginie.

He had also abundant opportunity to institute another comparison, which was of considerable importance, as it closely concerned himself; namely, this, that even when most completely under the influence of Isabel's fascinations, he had always been sensible when in her company of a certain degree of constraint, which gave his preference for her a character of deferential admiration, rather than of love. There was about her a grandeur, a completeness, a magnetic attraction, which, during the time that he was spell-bound by her charms, prevented him from perceiving the total want of sympathy between their characters. But how different was it now! In Virginie's presence his feeling was one of complete satisfaction and enjoyment; and he was so happy in her society, that the wish that he might obtain her hand was soon exchanged for the far more comprehensive one that he might obtain her heart. Nothing could better demonstrate the character of his feelings than this change of words. At the time that he proposed for Isabel the calmest preference would have satisfied him; now he was anxious to be beloved.



Had the good Baroness known anything of this, she would have had no occasion for uneasiness; but mothers are often subject to be thus troubled.

CHAPTER XI.

"Do you know, my dear," said Baroness Ebba, one day, when the party were assembled at dinner; "I really think our neighbour at Svärdsö must be ill. It is so many days since we have seen or heard of him."

"Very possibly," replied the Major.

"Very possibly! How coolly you take it."

"Why, what would you have me do; especially with my mouth full of hot peas?"

"I think you might go and call upon him, and see what has become of him?"

"My dear Ebba, how can you think of proposing to me to pay visits of mere ceremony, when you know how much work the horses have to do? But, in the case of our neighbour, there is no sort of occasion for it, for I now recollect

that the bailiff at Tyringsholm told me, the day before yesterday, that he had met him on his way to the town."

"You really are too bad," said the Baroness, accompanying her reproof, however, with a smile; it never occurs to you to tell us anything unless you are accidentally reminded of it. You get worse and worse every year."

"Well, the intelligence was not so very important! But what say you, Virginie? do you think it is of such great consequence that we should know whether the Count happens to have left home for a few days?"

"No, that is of no great consequence. But I agree with mamma, that you never tell us any of the news you hear when you are out."

"I cry you mercy! two against one—that is not fair! But suppose now I could make amends by telling you a real genuine piece of news."

"Well papa, you certainly could not take a nobler revenge."

The Baroness said nothing, but looked inquiringly at her husband.

"It concerns the Count," said the Major, endeavouring to excite the curiosity of the ladies still further, by assuming an air of mysterious importance.

"The Count?" exclaimed both mother and daughter, at once.

"Yes, even so; but as it never occurs to me to tell you anything, and as I get worse and worse every year, perhaps I had better keep my news for another opportunity?"

"Do not be so tantalizing, my dear," said the Baroness gaily. "I see you have something pleasant to tell us."

"I do not exactly know about that—it is a matter of taste. For my part, begging pardon for the comparison, I think it is like a lump of sugar-candy that is given to a child to stop its mouth."

"What strange comparisons you make. Do you mean that the Count has had the offer of some advantageous post, which would compel him to leave this neighbourhood?"

"Oh dear! no; there is no question of any post; nor do I think he would accept any. But here is the wonderful news!" And the Major drew from his pocket the newspaper of the day, and pointed to a paragraph, announcing that Count Pontus von M—, had been invested with the title of *Hofmarschall*.

"Well that is very suitable," said the Baroness with a smile, that showed her satisfaction.

"I think it sounds very stiff and pompous," said Virginie, "and that it will be very tiresome to have to address him by it, every time one speaks to him."

"Very well said, my dear! I am glad you think

so—for my own part, I am no friend to such empty dignities, which only cost money without conferring any real advantage—and I wish with all my heart, I might live to see a motion brought forward in parliament, for the suppression of all such honorary titles, which are good for nothing, but to excite envy and jealousy amongst those who are foolish enough to think them worth quarrelling about.”

“My dear,” began his wife, colouring slightly, “you really are rather prejudiced in your views; if you abolish titles and decorations, what means will the King have of recompensing those who have distinguished themselves in his service?”

“You speak like—a woman!” broke forth the Major impatiently, and then continued in a milder tone—“but not like a sensible woman, as you generally do, my dear Ebba. Do you believe that even the sixteenth part of those, on whom those playthings have been bestowed, have really merited them by uprightness, zeal, or any other laudable quality.”

“Well, but you are forgetting my question.”

“To that I reply, that no one has any right to expect a reward for having done his duty at the post assigned him; and if he be a high-minded man, he will not be particularly flattered by this mark of favour for which he but never mind, I say no more.”

“My dear, you go too far in your opposition,” said the Baroness Ebba, laying her hand kindly on her husband’s arm. “I wonder what the poor Colonel, had he still been in the land of the living, would have said to such sentiments?”

Virginie was sitting after dinner at her loom, making the shuttle fly with the utmost diligence. She was particularly anxious to finish the piece of linen she had in hand, that very evening. Her loom was in an antechamber, one of the windows of which looked into the court—so that any one crossing it could look in (for she had forgotten to draw the blind) and see her working as fast as if her livelihood depended upon it.

It was not possible, that with the noise she was making, Virginie could hear a carriage drive up, and Count M——’s footstep, well as she knew it, traversing the inner court; neither could she guess how well he could see in—nor that it was the Count himself who, after a short pause, opened the door of the ante-room instead of the drawing-room, and entered.

If Virginie had a bright colour before, it was considerably heightened now that she beheld the Count, and recollected her short petticoats, her sleeves tucked up, her bare neck, and worst of all, a few hooks which had given way at the back of her gown.

“I certainly ought to bid you welcome,” said

she, with a look which did not express unqualified pleasure, "but, to say the truth, I cannot do so at this moment, you have taken me so by surprise. Papa told us only just now that you were gone to the town."

"But I returned this morning, and hastened to make amends to myself for the many days I have lost. Meanwhile, I beg your pardon for the liberty I have taken in looking in here; but I was really quite astonished to see Mademoiselle Virginie so busy. Is not this rather hard work for a young lady? I am afraid it is!"

The Count's tone showed a certain degree of concern; and he appeared very little gratified by this proof of Virginie's diligence.

"I shall have the honour of seeing you in the drawing-room presently," said Virginie, assuming the little dignified air that became her so well, and with it a look of such marked displeasure, that the Count perceived he must at once retreat from her sanctuary.

"My dear Baroness, is it possible that you allow your daughter to amuse herself in so laborious a manner?" Such was the Count's answer to Baroness Ebba's civil congratulations on his newly-acquired title.

"How is she amusing herself?" replied his hostess, in some surprise; "I thought she was busy at her loom."

"Precisely; but of course that can only be for her pleasure."

"It so partly, for Virginie always works with such good will that she is sure to make rapid progress; but this is, of course, a matter of utility rather than of pleasure; the piece of linen she is at work upon ought to have been finished long ago."

"So she is obliged to sit there and work like a slave?" resumed the anxious lover, who was unable any longer to conceal his displeasure, and deemed it impossible that a delicate girl, or more properly (for Virginie was not exactly a sylph) that a young lady destined to be Countess M—— could endure such exertion.

Baroness Ebba burst out laughing: "Well, that is putting the matter in a very tragic light; Virginie is strong, she has perfectly good health, and has been brought up from her earliest childhood, not indeed as a slave, but in the manner I thought most suitable for a portionless girl. As to weaving, it is perhaps the occupation of all others to which she has least attended, and besides, I have never given her any but light work, such as the piece of linen you found her busied with."

"And that will be her last, will it not?" said the Count, kissing the hand of Baroness Ebba with insinuating politeness; "However strong she might be, she would not be able to stand such hard

work. I assure you it would drive her into a consumption, if even her lungs are not already injured."

"Oh! there is not the slightest danger of that," replied the hostess, gaily; "a little exercise is very wholesome."

"Yes, that I am quite willing to admit, but it should be of another kind: driving, walking, or riding, would surely be sufficient exercise."

"But not half so useful; and I should have reason to reproach myself if I had not brought up Virginie to be a good housewife. Such domestic acquirements are never thrown away; and who knows what need my Virginie may some day have of them?"

The Count had very nearly disclosed in words the feelings which he had already betrayed by his anxiety. But he conquered the impulse he felt to come to the point at once, in order that he might learn his fate from Virginie's own lips, and that before she had been in any way prepared; for Count M—— had still a vivid recollection of his ill success on a former occasion, when he had employed an ambassador.

"So you have been absent?" said Baroness Ebba, who thought it was time to change the subject.

"Yes, I was obliged to go myself to A—— to see to the packing of a quantity of furniture for

Svärdsö, which I have long been expecting from Stockholm.

"Indeed! I thought everything there was so complete?"

"You could not really think so, for there is a great deal still wanting; but I hope all will soon be as it should. It might deserve some higher commendation if you would be so very kind as to favour me with your advice on the spot upon several points which I cannot quite decide."

"I am much flattered by your wish, and shall be happy to give you any assistance in my power. But it must be before the end of next week, for we have lately received the agreeable tidings of the intended return of my sister and Isabel to Tyringsholm towards the end of October."

Baroness Ebba congratulated herself on having been able to introduce the mention of this circumstance in so natural a manner; and she remarked, with some degree of secret satisfaction, that a slight shade passed over the countenance of her guest. "Aha," thought she, "that does not please you! No, no, the gloomy stillness of Tyringsholm is very different from the ease and gaiety of Tjällstorp."


"What, may we expect the ladies back so soon? It will be a great, although a melancholy, pleasure to me to see them again. Does the Baroness intend passing the winter at Tyringsholm?"

"Certainly. Could anything be more natural?"

"Indeed, I should have thought it almost more natural that she should not have done so. To me, at least, it appears that such a residence could only be painful to her, now that the property has changed hands, and that the Lieutenant, or some representative whom he may appoint, will no doubt take possession of it before the new year!"

It was the first time that the Count had alluded so openly to the affairs of the family. The Baroness did not think it necessary to assume any appearance of reserve, but replied with equal frankness: "Richard will not return until next summer or autumn, and it was at his urgent request that Eugénie agreed to remain there. I think, however, that she makes this sacrifice—for to her it *is* a sacrifice—chiefly for the sake of Isabel, who has become so attached to Tyringsholm that she preferred spending the winter there to continuing their journey to Paris, of which there was at one time a question, as they would have had the company of some agreeable friends."

The entrance of the Major put a stop to this conversation, which left the Count as much impressed as the Baroness could have desired with the necessity of his affair with Virginie being



brought to a conclusion before Isabel's return. As Virginie's future husband, he could visit Ty-ringsholm as often as he pleased, which, under other circumstances, would have been somewhat awkward. Besides which, a natural feeling of delicacy made him anxious that he and Isabel should not meet again until they could do so on a footing of future relationship.

And now for the first time the Count began to ponder how he could contrive to obtain a private interview with Virginie, since he was by no means disposed to request it from her parents. At this season the garden was too cold for even so glowing a scene, and in-doors the Major and his wife never left them alone sufficiently long for a question of this nature to be introduced and disposed of in peace. No, a drive to Svärdsö would certainly be the best thing, although even this was not without its drawback, seeing that a refusal was within the bounds of possibility. Perhaps he would do best to write; he could thus express his sentiments more openly, and, at any rate, a positive answer would be obtained. But then, in that case, he must dispense with the advantage of calling in looks and tones to aid his cause.

Virginie's entrance put an end to all these reflections.

The Baroness remarked that her daughter appeared embarrassed, that she did not look the

Count in the face when he spoke to her, and that as soon as courtesy permitted, she took her work and seated herself at the window.

Virginie was a little annoyed at his well-meant interference about the weaving, but there was, no doubt, something more than this which occasioned her embarrassment.

Mademoiselle Virginie von L—— had reached her nineteenth year, without one of the young men, with whom she had had the opportunity of associating, having made any impression on her heart. It is true that she had been exposed to no great temptations in that way, for with the exception of one or two passing flirtations, no one had paid any attention to her. The reason of this was to be found in the fact, that she was at once poor and of good family. There were but few wealthy bachelors in the neighbourhood, and these few aspired to make what they considered good matches. Worthy and estimable people, in easy circumstances, but of a somewhat lower grade, as for instance, a young clergyman, a tax-gatherer, and an agent, who had all three entertained serious thoughts of a young lady at once so pretty and so domestic—all three took fright at the rank and pride of her relations; Heaven forbid that they should enter the Colonel's connexion!—none of them had courage for that.

A third class, namely, some young ensigns and cornets, whose hearts had not been proof against Virginie's expressive eyes, were equally obliged to renounce all hopes of marriage, as neither party had anything to live upon, and in these very prosaic days, even love itself is frequently subjected to the harsh dictates of reason.


Thus Virginie had reached the age of nineteen, (terrible reflection!) without having had an admirer, and therefore it was, that the late Colonel had angrily exclaimed, on hearing the failure of his cherished project, with regard to the Chamberlain: "Well, thank Heaven, she will at least be able to say that she has had an offer!" She had, indeed, had an offer, and the whole neighbourhood was in a state of amazement that she had not accepted it; but girls are so capricious! However, it would not be fair to say so of all girls, for there are many who do not care the least whether the world says, "she was glad to take up with the first man that presented himself!" and they are quite right; for those who have been so fortunate as to have the opportunity of refusing a good offer do not always find that of accepting one. We do not, however, mean to accuse our unpretending little Virginie of such childish vanity, and are the less inclined to attribute her refusal of the Chamberlain to so low a motive, when we recollect her

blush, on hearing her mother say, "I do not know any man in the whole circle of our acquaintance who could have gained your affection."

A good deal is sometimes implied by a blush, though we would not advise any one to trust to so deceitful a symptom; and probably Virginie's blush was not without sufficient cause. It might be thought absurd if we were to express our opinion, that Count M——, a man who had nearly attained his fiftieth year, could have awakened, in the heart of a girl of 'nineteen, a feeling sufficient to account for it. We are not the least sure of it; but the Count was handsome and did not look by any means so old as he really was. Moreover, before his proposal to Isabel, he had, for a time, showed quite as much attention to Virginie as to her cousin; and in short, it must not be considered too great a miracle if, in our age of reason, a young lady, who had never yet had an offer, felt a certain degree of preference for a man like the Count.

We must, therefore, assume that this was really the case; for at the moment that Count M—— seated himself beside her at the window, she blushed even to the roots of her hair.

The Count on his side did not fail to remark this favourable symptom with a degree of delight which might have become a lover of twenty; and with a quickness very creditable to a man of his years, he seized an opportunity when the Major



had gone to his bedroom to fetch a pipe, and Baroness Ebba was watching her little boys at play in the court from another window, to take Virginie's hand and whisper to her: "I have been unwilling to request a formal permission to speak to you on a subject, concerning which I wished first to hear your own decision; may I hope that you divine my meaning?"

Much as the young lady was astonished by the suddenness of the address, she was yet equally pleased that the Count should have applied in the first instance to herself, and as she saw there was no time to be lost, and required none to reflect upon an answer which had long been given in her secret heart, she replied in a low voice, and with the most graceful modesty: "I see no reason why I should deny it?"

"May I interpret these words according to my wishes? will Virginie not disdain to accept my heart and my name?"

"I will endeavour to become worthy of both," was the earnest and heartfelt reply, and the look which accompanied it convinced Count M—— that he had now reached to the happiest moment of his life."

Bending low over the hand of his young bride, he pressed upon it a tender and grateful kiss.

"Will you not smoke a pipe this evening?" asked the Major, entering.

The Major was well aware that his guest never

smoked, but also knew what was his usual answer, "No, I thank you, but I hope you will not abstain from smoking on my account." This time, however, the usual answer was not given; instead of it the Count rose, and said frankly and without further preamble: "I have just now ventured to make a confession which I have long had at heart; and Mademoiselle Virginie has returned me an answer, which if sanctioned by her parents, will cause me the highest happiness that my life has ever known."

It will be readily imagined that this sanction was not withheld. The joy it caused was quiet but sincere; and so Virginie had had not only one but two offers, and was now positively engaged.

What would the Colonel have said, could he have known that Virginie, for whom he cherished such very humble expectations, was going to be married to a great *parti*, even Count M—— himself, and a *Hofmarschall* into the bargain? Would he not have been delighted?—he who had such a love for distinguished alliances?

The Major did not sympathise much in this respect with his late brother-in-law; but although he did not confess it, perhaps even he was not quite insensible to the pleasure of having for a son-in-law, one upon whom the Colonel himself would so gladly have bestowed his own beautiful daughter.

CHAPTER XII.

WHILE the happy party at Tjällstorp are drinking the health of the betrothed pair in a bottle of the Major's best wine, an event of less importance, but scarcely less pleasurable, occurred at the Sacristan's cottage, being the arrival of a letter from Mary who was now looked upon by her parents almost as a sort of a superior being, since she had been considered worthy, not only to be the acknowledged bride of the young Baron, but to live under the protection and in the constant society of the Baroness and Miss Isabel.

It is true that in the first days of the calamity at Tyringsholm Mother Christina had said to her husband, "Well, it is not, after all, such a great piece of good luck to become the wife of a madman, who has lost both name and fortune, and has not got a shilling with which to provide for


her. No wonder the Baroness's pride is brought down. She uses a very different tone now to what she did when she wanted to make us marry our Mary to Kalle, the Commissary's son. And now Mary will have to spend her life as a sick-nurse; or, worse still, she will have to wait upon him like a little child, for he does not know his right hand from his left, or even whether he is hungry or not; and, perhaps, at last they will have to send him to a mad-house, and will want Mary to go with him. Who knows,—he might even be deprived of his title of Baron!"

To this outbreak the Organist, who took a calmer view of the matter, would reply: "He is a Baron, and will remain one as long as he lives; and although, thanks to his father's crime, he has lost the entailed estate and his new name, that need not prevent him from resuming his old one, and being as respectable a man as ever. Everybody must be aware that no man can be accountable for what came to pass before he was born. And his circumstances cannot be so desperate neither. The Colonel left some property; and there is, besides, the Baroness's own fortune, which she inherited from her father. And, then, do you suppose Miss Isabel, who is so rich, would let her brother want?"

Mother Christina perceived the truth of all this, and gradually lowered her tone; and when

she learnt that the Baron was not only quite well, but going abroad, she began to be very much frightened lest her rash words should be punished, and all the hopes destroyed which she had founded upon Mary's exaltation. But when, on the evening of the day of Baron Klas's departure, Mary came to visit her parents, and related all that had passed in the morning, and how Baron Klas had proclaimed her his bride in presence of the whole assembled family, and had given her a ring, and how the Baroness and Miss Isabel had said she was to live with them during the Baron's absence, and that it would be a pleasure to them to educate her in a manner befitting Klas's wife,—when all this astounding intelligence was communicated, old Alsing folded his hands, and breathed a silent prayer for the future happiness of his beloved Mary; but Mother Christina felt a greatly increased respect both for Mary and for her own self, and almost made curtsey as she exclaimed:—


“Well, to be sure, what events we do live to see! Absolutely announced to the family! All as it should be. And to think of your being own sister-in-law to Miss Isabel; and that you should have a right to call our Baroness your mother, and Baroness Ebba your aunt, and Miss Virginie your cousin! Dear me, Mary, that is all so grand that I can scarcely believe it.”



But Mother Christina's raptures attained a yet higher pitch when it was known that Mary who was now universally designated as Mam'selle Alsing, was to accompany the Baroness and Miss Isabel on their journey to Copenhagen. On the day that Mother Christina received this great news, two of her richest and most important neighbours were invited to drink coffee at her house, and when her table was spread, and the plate, piled high with cracknels, was being handed round, Mother Bridget, the farmer's wife said: "What excellent cakes these are! really, Mother Christina is a pattern for us all both in great things and small ones, but may I ask how Mary is going on? there have been grand things reported in the neighbourhood."

"Dear Mother Bridget, you should not ask after Mary but after Mam'selle Alsing," interposed the assessor's wife, with something of a sneer.

"Thank you for your kind enquiries," replied Mother Christina, pretending not to notice the contemptuous tone of these last words, "Mam'selle Alsing is quite well. She was here early this morning, and talked a great deal about her intended journey to Copenhagen with her mother and sister-in-law. She is such a favourite with the Baroness and Miss Isabel, that they cannot do




without her even for an hour; and, thank Heaven, Mary knows how to behave as well as if she had been a baroness all her days."

The two visitors opened their eyes wide in astonishment. "No, really?" exclaimed the assessor's wife, "is her marriage with the Baron such a settled thing? It will be very pleasant for you, Mother Christina, to have such a high-born son-in-law. It would no doubt have been otherwise though, but for the disgrace which has fallen upon his name; but one can easily fancy that the poor man, now that he has lost all his property and has become so notorious, could not hope to marry any young lady, for the least as well as the greatest among them would always require an untarnished name. I am going to marry my Anna Lena to a countryman; but thank Heaven, he has a few acres of land that he can call his own, as well as his house and yard, and I should like to see any one that could rob him of his good name."

"For my part," said Mother Bridget, rather pointedly, "I think it is better to have a little with honour, than a great deal with shame, but of course that is a matter of opinion."

So all that poor Mother Christina had got in return for her self-glorification, her good coffee, and her cracknels, was, that after they had eaten and drank, her neighbours repaid her with scorn and provocation. This was a severe punishment



for her pride, but when her arrogant gossips were gone she consoled herself by the reflection that their words had been dictated by envy and malice, which she could afford to despise. She had now no need to trouble herself with any further civilities, for the time was long passed when she had been ambitious to be employed as cook at their festivities ; now she could hold her head as high as any of them, and they might wait a long time before they were honoured by another invitation.

In consequence of these consolatory reflections, Mother Christina did not fail to mount the high horse, and when her neighbours gave signs of desiring a reconciliation, she pretended not to perceive it, but was as stiff and dignified as the lady of any good burgher of Stockholm ; and much was said and done before she consented to afford the assistance of her culinary talents to the preparations for Anna Lena's wedding.

In her own family, however, she was more amiable than ever ; in fact, both she and her husband were in the seventh heaven, for, besides Mary's good fortune, it followed as a matter of course, that the Baron's brother-in-law would not be overlooked. Gustavus had already been sent to a distant mine to learn his business, and his mother already, in imagination, saw him installed as superintendent of mines, or even, perhaps, as a

small proprietor on his own account, for his noble relations would not fail to assist him, were it only for their own credit's sake.

Now, however, old Alsing and his housewife were seated at the table. The old man drew out his spectacles, and broke the seal of Mary's letter. Mother Christina assumed a listening attitude, her knitting-needles and stocking resting motionless in her right hand, while with her left she mechanically stroked the cat, which had jumped up and nestled in her lap—interrupting herself, however, to push a glass of grog towards the reader. Mary's letter was as follows:—

“My beloved parents,—I am very happy, and thank God for all the blessings that he has showered upon me. The maternal kindness of the Baroness towards me, is more than I can describe. I am, indeed, not worthy of such goodness, which at one time I could so little have anticipated; and God forgive me for confessing that I am less touched by it than by the consideration shown me by Miss Isabel. Those who do not know her think her proud and dignified; and to a mere acquaintance perhaps, she may appear so—there is so remarkable and peculiar a refinement in all that she does; but when one comes to know her, it is easy to see that she has no wish to be dignified: as for pride, that is quite out of the question; and although there is something about

her which makes every one feel the difference that there is between herself and them, with me she converses as freely and as confidentially as if I were her equal. Frequently, when we are visiting the many beautiful and wonderful sights that are here to be seen, she is kind enough not only to listen to all my admiration and astonishment, but to draw from me expressions which I can only have acquired from her. Certain it is, that she knows how to awake in me thoughts such as I never had before, but which then become quite clear to my comprehension. But I will not speak further on this subject at present, or my dear parents will think that I am no longer the same Mary. She wanted to give me all sorts of masters, but Klas Malchus wrote and begged that I might be left just as I was ; and, as he wishes it, I am content that it should be so. Nevertheless, I think he will find that I am improved since he has seen me.


“Miss Isabel often receives the visits of an eminent physician. I see that he does not come for mere pleasure, and I am afraid there is something wrong about her health, although she does not wish any one to know it, for I have observed that she has medicine to take every night, and I think the colour of her complexion is rather altered. I do not know what I would not give to ask her, or that she would speak to me on the subject. But

on some points she is so reserved, that there is on approaching them. Perhaps—but this is only my own idea, and I do not know whether I am not doing wrong in mentioning it;—perhaps she regrets her refusal of the Lieutenant, and if she knew as much as I do she would be still more grieved. But, thank God, she has never asked to see any of the letters which I receive from Klas Malchus.

“To you, my dear father and mother, who are not so closely concerned in the matter, and yet I know take much interest in all that concerns our good Lieutenant, I will however tell what Klas Malchus writes. Only for heaven’s sake do not repeat it, for fear it should reach Tjällstorp. I see by Baroness Ebba’s letters to her sister that they believe all is well with him. They trust to what he writes, and in order to cheer and comfort them, he evidently conceals the truth.

“On Saturday I received my dear Klas’s last letter. It makes my heart beat to write those words! I think I had better transcribe what he says about the Lieutenant:—


“Happy and comfortable as I am myself, I am yet very uneasy about my poor Richard, he seems to waste away day by day. You remember his fresh complexion; now his cheeks are quite pale and sunken; his hair, of which he used to take such care and in which he had a sort of pride, is now as neglected as my own, which for convenience



sake I have suffered to grow after its own old fashion.

“‘Two months have indeed power to produce a great effect. But the sad change in his outward appearance (though so great that he is scarcely to be recognized) is nothing compared to that of his whole being; whether in body or in mind he is but the shadow of his former self.

“‘And yet I am proud to be able to bear witness that he makes every effort to rouse himself, and master the evil; but to judge by what I see, I fear he will not succeed. I even cannot help fearing that it may cost him his life, and that thus, that ill-omened Tyringsholm may again revert to me. He has now taken it into his head to undertake a journey to Switzerland, (but has been detained here several weeks by an attack of illness) and as I have for some time been aware of his secret desire to be alone, I have told him that I could not make up my mind to tear myself from Berlin and shall therefore await his return here—where I am very comfortable, and lead a life which suits at once my character, and the early habits of which the recollection is still so dear to me. I go out very little, and yet I am not solitary, for my books, and the society of an esteemed friend, with whom I have here become acquainted, afford me inexhaustible sources of enjoyment, and I should desire nothing more, if I were not so unhappy about Richard



and if you, my own sweet Mary, were with me. You may perhaps think—but of this you would hardly suspect me—that I have decided to remain here merely for my own sake, and not for that of Richard ; but, Mary, I am not so selfish as that, and if I were not firmly persuaded that it would be better for him to be left to himself, I would readily and willingly give up my books and comfort, and go with him to the world's end. But there are circumstances in which even the best friend may be superfluous, and in which his friendship is best proved by keeping out of the way.'

"I have copied this paragraph from Klas Malchus's letter, partly because it gives me pleasure to copy every word that has flowed from his pen, and partly that you may see how he writes to me—not only as to his bride but to his equal ; and I really do think I am becoming in some degree a lady. I wish, my dear parents, you could see me when I go out driving, either sitting opposite Miss Isabel, or beside her when the Baroness does not accompany us. I then wear either black or a brown silk gown, a large handsome white shawl, a rice-straw bonnet, parasol, a bag, and Heaven knows what besides ; I almost feel as if I had already a right to be called 'Your Ladyship,' and have learnt to assume a little bit of dignity ; but then every now

and then comes a hearty fit of laughter, for I am only Mary Alsing, after all. And every day I pray to God to preserve me from pride and vanity; for I know that these are the faults of all others which Klas Malchus most abhors, and I have firmly determined never to show anything like haughtiness to those who are beneath me; for I remember so well what I felt when the Baroness asked me 'What I expected?' But I will not think of that; she has atoned for those words a thousand-fold by her kindness, and I only recall them in order to remind myself never to assume any airs of superiority when I become a baron's wife.

"I would not for the world trouble Klas's enjoyment of his present residence, though it is quite certain that nothing here can make amends to me for his absence. But upon this point I am silent, for if he thought that I was much grieved by it, he would, I am sure, hasten his return; and I would not have him leave his books until he himself considers it time to do so. But how dreadful it would be if the Lieutenant were to die and Tyringsholm to revert to Klas! It would be only a misfortune to him—and the Lieutenant's death would be a bitter sorrow to many. I cannot think of it without tears. But above all things do not let this go any further, and remember that we could do nothing more disagreeable to the Lieutenant than to

excite the anxiety of his parents by letting the slightest mention of this subject reach their ears.

"I hope my mother is kind enough to take care of my doves. I think of them every day.

"The Baroness and Miss Isabel desire to be kindly remembered to all friends and acquaintance; pray do the same for me. I am very glad my mother did not make a serious matter of the little quarrel with the Assessor's wife, but went and helped at the wedding notwithstanding. Oh! when will you have to prepare for mine?

"Miss Isabel sees a great many visitors; but Heaven knows how she can stand it, or why she does it; for it gives her no pleasure, but rather pain, as I perceive when they are gone, and that I see her lying on the sofa looking so unlike herself. She is not happy, notwithstanding all the admiration and attention that she receives. But now I must conclude. This is the last letter you will receive from me, for next week we shall return home.

"Ever your dutiful daughter,

"MARY."

When old Alsing had finished this letter, which had of course been interlarded and illustrated by many remarks, Mother Christina put down the eat, smoothed her apron, and observed:

"Well, father, it is a good thing for Mary now,

that you taught her to write so nicely when she was a child, and how well she expresses it all! Thank God for all his goodness!—but if it were to be His will—which for the sake of the kind Baroness Ebba I would not wish for the world—if it *were* to be His will (for of course we cannot help the dispensations of Providence) that that good young Lieutenant should die abroad, I do not see that it would be such a great misfortune for our son-in-law to recover possession of Tydingsholm in all justice and honour.”

“No, no, Christina,” said the Organist, as he folded up the letter, “I do not agree with you. I think it would be a heavy calamity, for it is not unlikely that the death of the Lieutenant, coupled with the ill-luck that seems to attend the entail, might again affect his mind. He would never be easy at Tydingsholm, and would never have a happy day there, and therefore, mother, we ought to pray, ‘lead us not into temptation.’ It would be a great and heinous sin in us to wish the estate to lapse to another proprietor. No, let us rather pray from the bottom of our hearts that the Almighty may restore the Lieutenant to health and cheerfulness, for his death would be a cruel blow to more than one. You are a mother yourself, Christina, and love your children, so think of our good Baroness Ebba, and beware of falling into sin!”

“God help me, father, I am not guilty, at least in the way you think. I will indeed pray earnestly that our good Baroness may be spared such a trial. But do you know I have often thought how lucky it was that I did not have my way at Mary’s christening, when I wanted to have her called Sara Britta, after her godmother. That would not sound at all well now that she is to be a baroness; but you were always a sensible man, father!”


The Organist laughed, “You know we had a *prima donna* in our troop, who as you may imagine, was not quite indifferent to me, and that is why I wished the child to be called after her. Mary is a pretty name. But pour me out a little more grog, and do not look so sour over it. I have been happier with you than I should ever have been if I had married the *prima donna*, with all her paint and her finery.”

Mother Christina smiled good humouredly as she reached down the bottle of rum from the cupboard, and poured out another glass of grog for her husband in honour of Mary’s letter.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE autumn wind had already stripped the last leaf from the bare boughs, and howled stormily around the empty halls of Tyringsholm. The snow beat against the windows, and a grey and heavy fog hung over the landscape. The struggle would soon be over, and nature would seek repose under her shroud of snow.

On one of those raw and dreary mornings which are so frequent towards the end of autumn, we find two persons, a gentleman and a lady, seated on the sofa in the blue drawing-room with the mirrors, in each of which their images are reflected. The former is an old man, with a somewhat bluff but good-humoured countenance, not in the least changed since we saw him last. We cannot say the same of the lady. Her tall figure preserves all its former dignity; the same



grace is to be found in every one of her movements; and yet the mirrors give back a very different face from that which was reflected in them on the ball-night of the previous year. It was then pale, it is true; but now there is a faint olive tinge mingled with the marble whiteness of her skin, and the blue rim under the eye is grown broader and darker. A loose, half open morning-gown, of black silk, falls in rich folds, nearly covering the small feet which rest upon one of the sofa-cushions. Her hair, no longer curled, is smoothly braided half over her cheek, and rolled at the back in a massive coil, gracefully held together by a golden pin. Her right hand confines the folds of the red shawl which she has resumed, and which has partly fallen from her shoulders; while the left plays mechanically with some sprigs of geranium on the table by her side.

Thus we find Isabel again. But we cannot attempt to describe the expression of her countenance. It bore the stamp of deep sorrow, mingled with patient resignation. That the struggle was not over, was all too plainly visible; but it tended towards repose—sunset was at hand.

“A malady of this nature,” said Doctor Manning, in a voice that betrayed a shade of emotion, “may certainly make rapid progress in four or five months; but I own I am surprised at

the effect produced in this case by so comparatively short a period. How long is it since you have remarked the change in the colour of your skin? It is a symptom which I do not like."

"I noticed it during the last few days of our residence at Copenhagen; but it has perceptibly increased during the six weeks that I have been at home."

The Doctor shook his head. "How were your spirits on the journey?"

"My spirits are very even; I rarely give way to any violent outbursts, whether of joy or sorrow. But, at Copenhagen, I shared in as much amusement as my own health, and my mother's retired mode of life, permitted."

"And do you think your sufferings were in any degree relieved by it?"

"No, quite the contrary," replied Isabel, while a faint colour overspread her cheek. "But if my life is too quiet and solitary, I feel an uneasiness, a restless craving, for which I must seek relief. I am much better here at home, where I wish for no other society than that of my own relations, which is very agreeable to me."

"And no one is yet aware of your malady?" She shook her head. "I am afraid you carry your determination on this point too far. God knows I like to see women bear up courageously under the physical sufferings with which they

are so often afflicted—but when this self-imposed constraint is carried to too high a pitch, it may be injurious. And this, I think, it will be in your case, since you thus deprive yourself of the care and attendance of which you stand in need.”

“Oh, no! dear Doctor Manning. I assure you that is of no consequence. Would you advise me already to impart this sad intelligence to my family, when I have still so long a period of suffering before me? Besides, I have told you that I have in my nature a degree of irritability, which would be increased to an almost intolerable degree by the necessity of listening to perpetual comments and inquiries, however kindly meant.”

“They cannot, however, be altogether blind, and I must frankly say that your looks speak plainly.”

Isabel raised her eyes to one of the mirrors; “I certainly do not look well,” said she, in a low voice; “but the appearance is increased by the darkness of the room. When I exert myself, which I always do when I am in the presence of my family, the alteration in me is no longer so striking; besides, I am not so very thin.”

“Humph!” said the Doctor, and his tone was one of emphatic contradiction.

“Well, then, be it admitted that I am sallow, thin, and wasted; still I will not give way, but will maintain my position in the family circle as long

as possible. Think how my days would pass if I were confined to my bed; to myself more slowly than ever, and to those around me in the misery of anxious expectation. No, this must not be. Self-command and a strong will have power, even over the weakest frame. And I will not yield until the hand of death shall stretch me upon the bed, from which I am to rise no more."

There was a tone of determination in Isabel's voice which gave convincing evidence that a spirit like hers must have great power over the body. The Doctor regarded this young and courageous woman with silent admiration. He had had many patients, but never one like her; and he preserved her memory in his heart, as one of the noblest pages in the annals of human suffering which his practice had unfolded to him.

Both remained silent for a few moments, after which Doctor Manning rose, saying: "Will you permit me to trouble you once more?"

"Certainly; and willingly, if you could give me a more satisfactory answer."

"I cannot promise that; but give me leave nevertheless."

He took up an instrument which lay upon the table. Isabel leant back without the slightest affectation, and opened her dress. The Doctor applied the stethoscope to a spot in her bosom which she pointed out to him, and listened for as

long a time as he could maintain so constrained a position.

"I hope," said Isabel, as she once more fastened her gown and drew her shawl around her, "that you will now at length, my dear Doctor, be open with me. I hope you do not think that I have not firmness sufficient to bear the knowledge of the exact truth. I should be sorry if you could suppose that my resolution not to give way proceeded from a childish belief that I could thus prolong my existence. No, I assure you that I have reflected too long and too seriously upon the prospect of death, to fear it now. I might almost say, if it were not wicked to do so, that I long for its approach. As the whole brief period of my life can be but one prolonged death agony, this is surely no matter of wonder; and my anxiety to preserve my secret, and show myself strong in the presence of others, springs only from my wish still to enjoy, as far as may be, the life of the spirit. It would be chilled, if not crushed, by the atmosphere of sickness and of death, and by keeping this as much as possible at a distance, I believe myself to be a gainer both in body and mind. Have I sufficiently explained my feelings, and will you now be quite candid towards me?"

"I assure you, Mademoiselle, that I would not hesitate to satisfy you if it lay in my power, or indeed in that of any physician, to afford you the

information you desire. But the only thing which I can venture to say with certainty is, that the progress of the malady within the last few months has been more rapid than I could have believed possible; it is not, however, sufficiently advanced to enable me to judge of the period when your sufferings will cease for ever. I may probably be able to give you a more positive answer in the spring, should you then desire my presence."

"Not till the spring?" said Isabel, with a faint sigh; "I had believed all would be over before that time."

"No; not at least in all human probability. But if to my professional advice I might be permitted to add one other counsel, I would urge you not to tax your powers of endurance beyond what they are able to bear. And there is yet something more which has nothing to do with my medical capacity, but which, as a sincere friend, I think it my duty to mention, that is, if you will permit me to use such freedom."

"Pray speak, I am all attention," said Isabel, turning to Doctor Manning, who had resumed his place on the sofa.

"Well, then, my dear young lady, I will tell you, without circumlocution, that the rapid progress of your disorder is the result of a deep and secret sorrow, which will doubtless bring you to the grave a year sooner than would otherwise, in all probability be the case."

"I will not deny that you are right," replied Isabel, without however showing any outward signs of emotion; "but as it cannot be helped, I must be content to bear it."

"I will, however, venture yet farther, and maintain that it can be helped."

"How so?" enquired Isabel, the burning blood now mantling to her cheeks.

"I do not wonder, Mademoiselle, at your astonishment; but I am an old practitioner, and have learnt to observe and understand many things, and if I have ever in my life repented anything, it has been my candour when you first consulted me. If you had not then extracted a direct answer from me, things would doubtless be very different now."

"My dear Doctor Manning, do not speak thus! I confess, that I had at that time some hesitation as to the course I should pursue with respect to a certain matter. But even without your sentence, my hesitation could not have been of long duration, for the opinion of my Danish physician, and still more my own daily experience of suffering, gave me the most convincing evidence that recovery was impossible."

"That may be; but it will ever remain incomprehensible to me, how at that time, when you might have hoped for at least two or three years of life, you could have flung from you all the


happiness you might have enjoyed during that period, and chosen instead of it sorrow and vain longing, which undoubtedly consume your strength, and hasten your end."

"Your discourse, Doctor, has taken a turn which I scarcely understand," replied Isabel, with a shade of offended dignity in her tone. "Am I consumed by vain longing, and do I sorrow for myself?"

"Yes, that is my meaning," resumed the Doctor, with unmoved coldness; "and I should be glad if you would admit that my opinion has at least the evidence of probability in its favour."

"Your words are somewhat incomprehensible! I should have imagined there was little need to make any secret of my sorrow, caused by the bitter pain of our disgraceful lawsuit, and concern for the future of a person in whom I am deeply interested."

"It was precisely of that admirable young man that I wished to speak to you—of him who showed such magnanimity, such self-abnegation, when it would have cost him so little trouble, both to ascertain and to enforce his rights! I will venture to assert, that not one in a thousand would have made such a sacrifice, which in itself would have deserved to be stigmatised as folly or even madness, but for the purity of the motive from which



it sprang. I must add, that he did not conceal this motive from me; and I have since learnt how he was rewarded."

Isabel was silent.

"You might have made him happy; it was in your power to have bestowed upon him the amplest recompense."

"Was it in my power, if I did not love him?"


"You may say so, but my conviction of the contrary remains unaltered. No woman, however tender-hearted she may be, would suffer the sorrows of another to take such hold upon her, as to wear away the thread of her own life. It is only those of our own hearts which have power to do this, and it must indeed be a deep one which can produce such an effect."

"But granting, since you insist upon it, that we did stand in such a relation towards each other; would it indeed be so enviable a [recompense, to obtain to wife one, whose impending dissolution would keep her husband in a state of incessant fear and anxiety! Would it be happiness to him to feel, that every hour, every moment, that elapsed, had diminished by so much his brief period of bliss. Would it be happiness to see death tinging her features with his own ghastly hue, to see her becoming every day more feeble and wasted, until it would be but a living skeleton that his arms would enfold. And then, in his

deep misery, to know that not all his boundless love could give her one breath of strength, one hour of life. Oh! no—rather than this, it were a thousand times better to choose the one bitter pang from which he can fly, and which will heal itself.”

Isabel uttered these words calmly, and in an unfaltering voice. They were succeeded by a pause of a few moments’ duration. Although she had made no distinct admission, the old Doctor nevertheless understood her, and looked with profound sympathy upon the woman who had been capable of such a sacrifice for the sake of him whom she loved. But Doctor Manning was better acquainted than any one else with Richard’s present state, and he feared that Isabel had cast away the transitory happiness which they might have enjoyed together—without benefit to him. After pondering for a moment the importance of the subject which he was about to introduce, he proceeded cautiously: “I am quite ready to admit that you have convinced me, provided the results be such as you hope and desire.”

“Oh, yes, I feel sure that my hope will be fulfilled. Each succeeding letter from him seems to be written in better spirits, and before he returns—which will not, I think, be very soon—the cause of all this misery will have been removed.”



"The cause may have been removed," resumed the Doctor, with emphasis, "and yet its effects may survive."

"Its effects—oh! they will fade away, together with an unrequited attachment."

"I cannot argue that point with you, but the same circumstances produce different effects in different instances. Let us, therefore, assume another case. Suppose, for instance, that you were mistaken, and that events were to take a turn so unexpected, that not he, but *you*, should have to learn that the cause of all these struggles was removed."

Isabel made an effort to rise, but sank back on the sofa; her trembling limbs refused her their support, and every tinge of colour faded from her face. "Is it possible that they have deceived me?" enquired she, in a tone which betrayed the deepest emotion.

"You have yourself seen his letters," replied the Doctor, with that calm composure which is the best antidote to the fear of some impending calamity.

"Yes, so I have; but what, then, was the motive of your suggestion?"

"When a subject is under discussion, have we not the right to assume every case which lies within the limits of possibility? Why will you

attribute more than their real meaning to my words?"


Isabel appeared for a moment rather embarrassed by the consciousness of the emotion she had betrayed; but her suspicions, once excited, could not be so easily lulled to rest. "Forgive me, Doctor Manning," said she, "if I cannot but believe that you had some motive for giving so painful a turn to our conversation. The more I reflect upon the so-called *chance* to which I owe your visit, the more I am persuaded that it was not the result of accident. No, I fear, I am sure it was some especial business which brought you hither."

"Very well, Mademoiselle, since you have guessed so correctly, I will no longer maintain that my visit was accidental; but will confess that I came here in consequence of an urgent letter from Lieutenant Richard, who desired to have a true and particular account of your state, and to whom I could not refuse to render this painful service."

"Dear, kind Richard," said Isabel, in a low voice, "so much anxious tenderness, even separated as we are!"

"Let him return. All will then be better."

"Do not endeavour to lead me into temptation; it would now be not only a dearly purchased illusion, but absolute madness, unworthy alike of



him and of me! These few remaining months I must dedicate to myself. My spirit must not be occupied with things which . . . in short, my dear Doctor, any attempt to shake my determination in this respect, would be utterly fruitless."

"In that case I will not urge you farther; but I think it my duty to tell you, that by your persistence, you will not only shorten your own life, but may probably endanger his also, which at present is unquestionably a very bad one."


Isabel was silent, but there was no trace of repentance or relenting visible on her countenance.

"I believe the course I have adopted to be the right one," said she, at length, "and therefore I shall adhere to it as long as I live; the day may come when you too will approve it, although your perhaps too keen sympathy at present prevents you from doing so. That Richard's health should have been much shaken, is not, surprising, owing to the strength and depth of his feelings, and the enthusiastic eagerness of his character. But, my dear Doctor, no one dies of love unless its effects be aided by some other cause. And a voice, the truth of which I cannot doubt, assures me that Richard will master his passion, and to this, my determination which now appears to you so harsh, will not fail to contribute. We have now exhausted the subject; let us, therefore, put au

end to this conversation. Tell me, however, first, for it would be a comfort to me to hear it, that you will not refuse me your esteem, even if I cannot obtain your entire approbation."

Dr. Manning was fairly conquered. It was full twenty years since he had kissed the hand of any woman, but now it was with unfeigned emotion that he pressed that of Isabel to his lips: "You have moved me much, my dear young lady; I can say no more. I did not believe that such firmness and consistency could be found in the conduct of any woman; and I verily believe that in this respect you stand alone. May God bless you, and sustain your courage to the end!" And a tear, to which the eyes of the old man had long been strangers, stole down his cheek.

"He will surely not suffer me, *then* to be overcome by a weakness which in life I have abjured. At least, I may hope so. And now, one word more; I entreat you to preserve the secret which by degrees I have been led to confide to you, as well as to remember that my resolution is grounded upon a conviction carefully weighed and matured; and that nothing would give me greater pain than that he should divine that which I have so studiously concealed from all the world, and above all from him! Barring this, I hope you will write to him in the kindest and most comforting terms which your own warm heart can dictate."



"Never will I make an unworthy use of your confidence," replied Dr. Manning, rising. "But permit me to make one last observation. The secret of your malady must be intrusted to some one of those around you; believe me, it is absolutely necessary."

"In that case I will submit; and my choice must fall upon my dear Mary; I know she is devotedly attached to me."

"Very well, she is a good girl, and I like her. I must, however, beg leave to give her a few instructions to-morrow, before I start."

"Pray do so, if you think proper." He left her room.


Now that she was alone, her head sank back upon the cushion, and scalding tears flowed over her cheeks for the absent one, of whom it had been at once so sweet and so painful to her to receive these tidings, which spoke so plainly of the anxiety of a loving heart. Happily for her she entertained some doubt of the statements she had just heard concerning his health. Not that she for one moment suspected Richard of having made use of such a pretext to induce her to recall him; but she thought that he unwittingly exaggerated the evil, confounding mental with physical suffering. She had no doubt this must be the case.

It was not until a glance at the clock warned

her that the hour of dinner was approaching, that she rose, and approached one of the mirrors, in which she scrutinized her own appearance long and narrowly. As the Doctor had shaken his head, so she now shook hers.


“This, then, is my vaunted beauty!” said she, with a sigh. “He was right; they cannot be blind to the change, and yet no one ventures to tell me so. But shall I not soon be better?”

She arranged the folds of her dress, enveloped herself in her shawl, and assumed the graceful and easy carriage which, together with a certain degree of careless elegance, was her peculiar characteristic. Her care extended itself to the veriest trifles, for there was not a disordered plait or fold which she did not discover and set to rights; and this, under circumstances in which it must have been, indeed, a lofty spirit that could have been capable of devoting attention to matters so insignificant.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE rest of the family were assembled in Baroness Eugénie's room. The two sisters, seated at a small work-table, while their fingers moved briskly, were discussing the necessary preparations for Virginie's wedding, which was to take place immediately after Whitsuntide. The Count and his young bride, were chatting together on the sofa. The former was now almost a daily guest at Tyringsholm, which was about half way between Svärdsö and Tjällstorp. It therefore suited all parties admirably, that Virginie should spend nearly all her time with her aunt; and as the Major and his wife looked upon Tyringsholm as almost their own property, they were as often there as at Tjällstorp. At the window sat Mary, to all appearance absorbed in her work, but in reality listening intently for the sound of Isabel's footstep.



"I should like to know where Isabel can be lingering so long," said Virginie, at length.

"So should I," replied the Count, with an enquiring look; "she is not, as usual, in the red boudoir."

"What are you two wondering about?" asked Baroness Ebba.

"That Isabel has not made her appearance, dear mamma. The Doctor, too, is nowhere to be seen; perhaps—I do not know why I should connect the two together in my thoughts?"

"Mary, do just go and see where they are; but do so cautiously," said the Baroness, with a significant glance. Mary rose, but did not go far, for at the door she met the Doctor.

Notwithstanding all Baroness Eugénie's efforts to be civil to Doctor Manning, even the very sight of him was painful to her. He, too, was conscious of a certain degree of constraint in her presence, and only the interest he felt in Richard and Isabel, could have induced him to pay a visit so disagreeable to him.

Conquering her repugnance to enter into conversation with him, the Baroness enquired of him whether he did not find Isabel much altered.

"I cannot deny it," replied the Doctor.

"But I hope there is nothing alarming in the change."

"I hope so, too."

The Doctor's answer was given in the same laconic tone which he occasionally used towards

his wife. If the Baroness had asked his opinion in private, and with any appearance of maternal anxiety, it would probably have been a very different one. But he was not pleased that such questions should be addressed to him in the presence of so many people, and did not care to conceal his displeasure.

"I am not much surprised at his giving such short answers," whispered Virginie to the Count, as Doctor Manning turned away. "The questions ought to have been put in a different manner."

The Count nodded his assent; and then, with his usual gallantry, rose to meet Isabel, who at that moment appeared at the door, and who, despite his sincere attachment to his bride, still exercised a certain degree of influence over him.

Isabel returned his greeting with her usual graceful ease, addressed a few jesting words to Virginie, who declared that she was jealous of her, and warned the Count against suffering so dangerous a fault in his future wife. She then entered into conversation with her mother and aunt, concerning the pattern of some slippers she was to embroider for Virginie, called upon Mary to give her advice as to the selection of the colours, and then seated herself beside Doctor Manning, whose countenance assumed a milder expression. As she did so the Major appeared, and thereupon dinner was announced.

In the evening the card-table re-appeared, for the first time, since the death of the Colonel, and

the three gentlemen enjoyed the amusement to their full satisfaction.

On the following morning, the Doctor had a long conversation with Mary before his departure. She listened to him with profound attention, and promised to observe all his directions with the utmost precision.

"Above all things, you must make no exhibition of feeling," said the Doctor, in conclusion, "otherwise you will not suit Mademoiselle von X——, and would, perhaps, not even be permitted to continue your attendance upon her. In order to gain her entire confidence, you must acquire strength and firmness equal to her own. There must be no lamentations or condolences, and as few questions as possible; beyond this, you have only to show her all the care and tenderness that she deserves."

"You may depend, sir, upon my endeavouring to do my duty to her to the uttermost; and I will not fail to exert myself to appear calm, although I feel as if my heart would break now that I know the fearful sufferings she has to endure."

"Yes, yes, that is what people always say, though it rarely happens that those who talk in that way really break their hearts; but do not be angry, Miss Mary, I meant no harm, for I am sure that the attendance upon Mademoiselle von X—— could not be entrusted to better hands. But be sure you do not forget one word of what I have told you."

Mary did not venture to add another word—the abrupt old Doctor was no favourite of hers; but she was not on this account the less determined to obey him implicitly.

The last few minutes of the Doctor's stay were dedicated to Isabel herself.

"And when you write to him, Doctor," said she, while her voice trembled slightly, "say everything to him that is most kind and affectionate from me; yet I would beg you not to be too explicit as regards the progress of my disorder."

"I shall consider well how much I ought to say; but I should not think myself justified in deceiving him. Other duties now summon me hence, but in the spring, if you approve of my doing so, I will again pay you a visit. Until then, farewell, and be assured that no one can feel for you more profound respect than the old Doctor."

The pressure of his hand was warmly returned, and they parted.

The days grew shorter and more gloomy—the nights longer and darker; and during their weary hours, the solitary lamp which burned in Isabel's bed-chamber often shed its rays upon a pallid group—when the suffering Isabel moved restlessly upon her couch of pain, while Mary, half undressed and seated on a chair beside her, poured out with a steady hand, although with tearful eyes, the dark-coloured drops that were to give her relief. They rarely addressed one another in

words, but their looks spoke volumes. Mary became every day dearer and more indispensable to Isabel; and the former, who attended upon her with the unwearied tenderness of a friend and the assiduity of a slave, regarded her with a feeling approaching to adoration.

At length winter came, with its unchanging rigour and its clear starlight nights. Then Isabel would have her curtains undrawn; and when the silvery beams of the moon streamed into the darkened chamber, shedding their silvery radiance upon the bed where she lay, and lighting up her pale cheeks and beautiful dark hair, which fell in unconfined luxuriance over her white night-dress,—then Mary would bend the knee in silent devotion, and Isabel, who understood her feelings, would raise her eyes to the glittering constellation of the Bear, and, in imagination, would follow its beams as they played upon the villages at the foot of the Alps, till she reached the hut which gave *him* shelter, when she would stand beside his couch, and, bending over him, would wipe from his brow the cold dews called forth by some painful dream.

What marvellous contrasts may be found enclosed within the narrowest limits! Here were Isabel and Virginie—two brides—the one decking herself for the grave, the other for the altar! But Virginie had no idea that their paths were so distinct, or a drop of deep bitterness would have mingled in her cup of joy.

The marriage was celebrated at Tjällstorp in the middle of January. It was not a brilliant one. The recent sad events forbade any display of rejoicing, and, besides, two cherished guests were wanting, Richard and Klas Malchus. This notwithstanding, a spirit of healthy cheerfulness reigned throughout all the preparations. And if a sigh of longing now and then burst from Baroness Ebba's bosom, her sadness did not extend itself to the bridal pair, who exhibited the agreeable spectacle of two people so perfectly happy, that they could afford to dispense with every thing except each other.

As Baroness Ebba, with trembling hands, placed the bridal wreath in her daughter's hair, which had been tastefully dressed by Isabel, a tear fell upon the flowers. "Dearest mamma," said Virginie, kissing her hand, "shed no tears over my bridal wreath, for I feel an inward conviction that it contains the promise of my future happiness."

"I, too, am firmly persuaded of it, my beloved child, and be assured that the prayer of a mother, at a daughter's bridal, will not be uttered in vain! I will only tell you that I have prayed to God to make you as good and true a wife as you have been a dutiful and affectionate daughter; and if I am not as cheerful to-day as I ought to be, you must forgive me. I have a longing at my heart which I am sure my Virginie will understand and pardon."

The daughter clasped her mother affectionately in her arms, and for a few moments they mingled their tears. Isabel turned away that no one might see the tear which silently stole down her cheek.

On the third day after the wedding the newly married couple celebrated their removal to Svärdsö. Then it was that Virginie, who had not been there for two months, had full opportunity to appreciate her husband's care and attention, in preparing for her all those comforts and luxuries which a happy home can offer.

"There is nothing omitted which can possibly add to the daily comfort of life," said she, as, finding herself for a few moments alone with her husband, she contemplated all the luxury which surrounded her; "and, with God's help, the best of all will not be wanting here, I mean happy hearts. I can answer for there being a grateful one, at least; for now that I may speak on the subject without blushing, I must tell you that I am perfectly aware that the portionless Virginie von L—— was a very unequal match for the wealthy Count M——."

"Yet you are the most precious treasure that I possess; but since you are inclined to be so frank," and the Count drew his young wife down on the sofa beside him, "tell me if it is really possible that you could have been attached to me before we were engaged?"

"If that had not been the case," replied she,

smiling, "we should, probably, never have been engaged at all. But I have loved you better and better ever since, and henceforward my affection will know no bounds; for I am persuaded that I shall never see any thing in you to alter the opinion I have formed of your character."

"I trust not. But, my Virginie, you must not forget that you have married an old man! I hope, indeed, that my temper will not grow peevish, but it is by no means unlikely that my health may fail, and then you must have patience with me and not withdraw your affection from me."


"Assuredly not! You must not misunderstand me. I know that even in the happiest life there must be occasional shadows, but those we must bear with patience. What I said, referred to your character, and to your affection for me, which will, I am persuaded, remain unchanged. If your health and spirits should suffer from advancing years, it will be my business to cheer you and take care of you. My opinion is that a wife who sincerely loves her husband should be a tie to bind him to life. She should leave him no opportunity to perceive the approach of old age."

The Count's reply was given in the glance of his eye, and the pressure of his hand. At that moment Isabel appeared in the door-way; she smiled upon them and was about to withdraw, but they both eagerly advanced towards her, and the Count taking her hand, which he respectfully kissed, said, in a significant tone :

"All is well that ends well!"

"And would to Heaven," said Virginie, gaily, "that all Isabel's discarded admirers could say the same."

"Leave my admirers to take care of themselves," replied Isabel, in the same tone, "and give me credit for my prophetic genius! Recollect that it was I who proposed drawing lots last year, when it was a question who should enact the mistress of the house at Svärdsö; and as the lot fell upon you, it is evident that the Goddess of Fate took the hint."



CHAPTER XV.

JANUARY and part of February had passed away, and Count M—— and his young wife paid frequent visits at Tyringsholm; still the separation of the two families was very marked, compared to what it had formerly been, for *frequent* and *constant* intercourse are two very different things. They were happy in their own home, and Isabel was not to be persuaded again to leave Tyringsholm.

The extreme cold of the drive, both to the wedding and to the housewarming at Svärdsö, had been too much for Isabel, who, although she endeavoured to appear as if she could bear everything, could in fact bear very little. The cold, keen north-wind had benumbed her limbs and chilled her blood, and but little vital warmth remained as she lay upon the sofa, in the red boudoir, watching the sunbeams as they fell upon the crimson curtains, behind the folds of which

Richard had so often sat concealed. Alas! those days were long, long past, but her memory still retained the images that had been impressed upon it, in those bygone days of happiness.

Since the end of January, too, she had borne an additional weight upon her mind, a secret anxiety which she frequently saw reflected in the dimmed eyes of Baroness Ebba. A long time had elapsed since any letters had been received from Richard. The preparations for the wedding had diverted the mother's attention for a time, but now that this was over, and they had returned to their usual quiet life, her anxiety increased with every post which brought her only fresh disappointment. She remained silent, however, in order not to awaken the fears of the rest. The Major and Virginie shared her anxiety notwithstanding, but no one had courage to express it, for after all the casual delay of a letter was no such extraordinary a circumstance.

This prolonged silence, so forcibly reminding her of Dr. Manning's hints, could not but produce a very unfavourable effect upon Isabel's failing strength. Her wasted features could no longer conceal the expression of suppressed suffering, but although it was obvious to every one that she was fading away, she nevertheless restrained all expressions of sympathy by her manner, which with all its graceful kindness had yet that in it which repelled confidence. No one ventured to question her; for, at the slightest allusion to her health, the

displeasure expressed in her countenance showed how unwelcome the subject was to her.

One day, however, the Baroness taking advantage of a mother's right of insisting upon an answer, (although it must be owned that it was somewhat late to bring it forward), said to her daughter: "Dearest Isabel, I think we must send for a Doctor, or rather I think we ought to go to some town where you could have constant medical attendance, such as your failing health requires. Indeed, this must be done; I cannot in conscience suffer you to go on thus."

Both the tone and words of the Baroness conveyed an impression of such sincere and affectionate anxiety that Isabel was touched. "My dearest mamma," said she, soothingly, "I assure you that I make use of the proper remedies here at home. And, believe me, a journey now, in mid-winter, would be very injurious to me. Doctor Manning intends coming here in the spring, and should he then recommend any change of residence, I should certainly offer no opposition. But at present it is really impossible, and therefore, dear mamma, pray do not let us speak of it."

The Baroness, who was never remarkable for very rigid determination, and who really feared the effect that a journey, undertaken in the depth of winter, might produce upon Isabel, at length gave way, consoling herself with the reflection, that she had, at any rate, done her duty, and that,

in fact, there was nothing more to be done, as Isabel was doubtless punctual in the observance of the prescribed means of cure. In the spring, however, she was determined to persuade her to undertake another journey in search of health.

Tyringsholm meanwhile became more and more lonely and deserted. During the winter, when all farming business and other improvements were at a stand-still, the Major preferred inhabiting his pretty and cheerful Tjällstorp. It is true that Baroness Ebba was very frequently there, and they received occasional visits from some of the neighbours, whom the Colonel during his brief reign had scarcely deigned to notice; there were, however, many days in which Baroness Eugénie and Isabel were quite alone together; for the proposal of the former that her daughter should invite some of her old friends from Stockholm to keep her company, had been decidedly declined by Isabel. For some weeks past, she had shown no desire for any sort of society; and although she did not appear annoyed when anything occurred to interrupt the monotony of their lives, Mary read in her countenance an expression of greater satisfaction when not obliged to impose any constraint upon herself. She would then spend nearly the whole day in the red boudoir, one of the rooms adjoining which she had caused to be fitted up as a bed-room.

It was about six o'clock on the 18th of February. Baroness Eugénie had driven over to

Tjällstorp with her sister, and Mary was gone to her own room to enjoy a chat with her mother, who had come to pay her a visit. A servant posted in the outer chamber had been long waiting in vain for Miss Isabel to ring for lights. It was almost dark, yet the signal was delayed, nor did he venture to enter her presence unbidden; for Mademoiselle von X—— was regarded with profound reverence by all the domestics.


Isabel lay upon the sofa, her head supported on her hand, so absorbed in thought as to be unconscious both of the lateness of the hour and of the darkness that was closing around her. It was one of those raw and gloomy winter evenings in which the beams of the new moon could scarcely pierce the mantle of mist in which it was shrouded. It however afforded just sufficient light to distinguish surrounding objects. On the table before Isabel lay an open Testament, and in the glance which she directed upwards towards the veiled and sullen sky, there was an expression of deep and earnest, but not morbid feeling. Of late especially, when the tumult of earthly passion had been, except occasionally and at lengthening intervals, locked to silence in her breast, Isabel had devoted much of her time to the contemplation of those religious truths which alone formed the basis of her future hope. Sometimes, indeed, her mind would lose itself in the dark mazes of eternal mystery, but she would again light her torch at the flame of faith, and

press forward, until once more the light would become extinguished, leaving her shrouded in the horrors of spiritual darkness; but she would not stand still in despair, and as she still pressed on in her search for truth, the mists would disperse, and the guiding light would again shine before her eyes. Her thoughts were now calm and peaceful, for she held fast the ground of her hope. She knew in whom she had believed, and she might have enjoyed all the blessedness which so often falls to the lot of the believing Christian when the hour of death draws nigh, if, in spite of all her efforts, of all her struggles, her soul had not been fettered by one tie which bound it still to earth.

Isabel's mind gradually passed from religious musing to the contemplation of the only other object which had still power to absorb her thoughts.

Once more she allowed herself the luxury of retracing in thought, those happy hours when he had sat there beside her, or upon the stool at her feet. She saw him as he was then, when life still appeared before his eyes invested in all its rainbow hues; she heard him speak of joy, of the bright and precious gift which he so dearly loved. Alas! his own soul was then full of joy—life had been very dear to him, until it had deprived him of all his cherished hopes.

But Isabel would not suffer her thoughts to dwell long upon the time of trial. She called up



Richard's image before her as he then was, in the freshness of his young beauty, when his unblighted spirit exercised such a powerful fascination over all around him. On a sudden her eyes fell upon the half open door, and it was with a feeling to which Isabel's strong spirit had hitherto been a stranger, that she then beheld, or thought she beheld a figure, which, illumined by the faint moonlight, bore indeed the semblance of Richard, but yet was not he, for the countenance on which her eyes were rigidly fixed bore not a trace of the hue of life. Persuaded that her imagination, which she always mistrusted, had conjured up a phantom before her, she closed her eyes; but still that image haunted her brain. A deep sigh burst from her lips, and it was with a sensation which words are inadequate to describe, that she heard it echoed by one deeper still. Making a powerful effort, she again turned her eyes towards the door—it was impossible for her longer to believe in an ocular delusion. The figure was still there, but the sunken eyes, the colourless lips, bore the stamp of death. The blood froze in Isabel's veins; she had but one thought, that Richard had preceded her, and that it was his spirit which had now come to seek her. She involuntarily extended her arms, and faintly murmured, "Richard!"

But her senses had nearly given way—for he who sprang forward and clasped her to his heart was no disembodied spirit. It was Richard him-

self—Richard, in whom seven months of absence had wrought this almost incredible change.


“Richard! is it you—you? yes! you are indeed Richard,” and Isabel no longer struggled to restrain her anguish on again beholding him whom she loved so deeply.

“Yes, Isabel! I am come back to you! I had stopped at the door, for I thought you were asleep. Once, but it is long ago now, I found you sleeping in this very room—but things were very different then, and you most of all! Forgive me if I frightened you, but my own fear was almost beyond endurance when I beheld Oh! Isabel, you are no longer like yourself—and yet always the same Isabel to me.”

“My feeling was the same as yours, Richard! We must mirror ourselves in each other’s looks.”

“Henceforward, that is the best that we can do! I have remained absent as long as I could—but now let us spend the little time that still remains to us together. Tell me that you will suffer my presence here? If it is disagreeable to you to see me, let me at least be near you that I may watch your breathing, listen to the sound of your voice. I cannot live on where I may not sometimes hear it—and I cannot die in peace while you remain on earth.”

“Stay, Richard, stay—remain with me henceforward if you will—we will comfort and support each other. But oh! what happiness would it have been to me to know that you bore your sorrow manfully.”



"Manfully!" repeated Richard, with a smile upon his lips which was neither sorrowful nor bitter, and yet full of a reproach more eloquent than words. "And do you then know, Isabel, how I have struggled! No, you do not know it, and it is needless that you should; only thus much will I tell you—I should not have returned hither if I had not certainly known that the vehemence of my affection will never again disturb your peace. I can now be with you without ever reminding you by a single word that there was a time when I was the slave and victim of a frantic passion. I too, have acquired calmness now."

And to judge by the tone of his voice and by his appearance, he was indeed calm; but he did well to say nothing of his inward feelings. He wished to conceal from her eyes all the stormy emotions that reigned within, for he would have scorned to appear before her as a suppliant for her pity. No; it was not that which he wanted; all he desired was, to be near her during the final struggle.

"Forgive me, Richard, I feel that I was unjust," whispered Isabel, in a softened tone; "but you may indeed stay with me now without any danger to yourself. Have you looked at me well?" This was a desperate attempt at a jest, and it failed signally. She turned away, and by the light of the pale moonbeams that streamed around them, the two wept bitterly for each other. He sank down on his knees beside the


sofa, and leaned his head upon her shoulder, while she, yielding to the sweet yet sorrowful impulse of the moment, passed her arm gently round his neck. When she looked at him, she felt convinced that he could not suffer more in remaining with her, than in being separated from her. Things had come to such a pass that worse they could not be; and why should both be deprived of the transient happiness of a few brief hours?

Several minutes thus elapsed, neither of them having courage to speak and disturb the melancholy tranquillity of the moment by recollections of the past or anticipations of the future. On a sudden a light footstep was heard approaching, and an exclamation from Mary expressed her amazement at beholding a man in such an attitude by Isabel's side. Her astonishment was still further increased, although its expression was restrained, on finding that the man was Richard, although he rather resembled a spectre than a human being.

"Do you not know me, Mary?" said he, advancing towards her.

The well-known voice and the pressure of his hand still further increased her emotion. "It was, indeed, a difficult matter to recognise you, sir," said she, in a low voice; "what will Baroness Ebba say?"

These words struck a new chord of Richard's excited feelings, which had been all hitherto centred on one object. "My mother!" exclaimed he, "my dear, kind mother, is she here?"



"No; but she will be here this evening with Baroness Eugénie. They are at present at Tjällstorp."

It seemed as if a weight were taken from Richard's mind by the assurance that he would not immediately have to meet the anxious gaze of his affectionate mother.

"Thank God!" said he. "I shall thus at least have a little time to recover myself! Virginie will, I suppose, accompany them?"

"You are perhaps not aware, sir, that your sister's wedding has already taken place? We expect the Count and Countess here to-morrow. How surprised they will be! But now I will fetch a light, it looks so gloomy here. And may I not bring the tea also?" This question was addressed to Isabel, whom, with a sort of instinctive delicacy, she had refrained from addressing until she should have had time to recover from what Mary imagined to have been an unwelcome interruption.

"Yes, you are quite right, Mary; the darkness and the moonshine have a ghastly effect. Come back with the tea and lights; I will, myself, wait upon Richard."

"I beg your pardon," said Mary, blushing, as she paused on the threshold; "but I suppose you have not——"

"No, Mary; I have not seen Klas Matchus

since I set out on my journey to Switzerland, but his letters inform me that he is both well and happy."

"Thank God for that!" said Mary, as she hastened away.

Richard stood beside the sofa with folded arms. Isabel did not look up; but she felt the influence of his presence, and, trembling at its power, she exerted herself to turn the conversation from everything which could touch upon their own mutual position. "You see in Mary," said she, "the sharer of all my occupations, of my sufferings, and of my pleasures. She is a most welcome and suitable companion to one who is doomed to a sort of semi-existence such as mine."

"And do you bestow upon her your entire confidence?"

"Yes; without restriction."

"Heaven be praised that you have permitted any one to tend you! But henceforward that must be my privilege; I must not be deprived of this mournful consolation; for you must know, Isabel, that during my long and often arduous journey home, it was this hope alone which sustained me."

"And yet, my dear Richard, you look as if you yourself required nursing as much, if not more than I do; you must have suffered fearfully from a journey at such a season."

"I already remember it no longer; and when I have been with you a little while, all will be again right with me."

Mary now entered with the light, and so on after, the tea equipage was invitingly placed upon a small table, between Richard and Isabel. Now that she looked at them by lamp-light, the faces of both appeared to her even more haggard than before. And it seemed as if this were their own impression also; for no sooner had their eyes met, than they were hurriedly turned away.

"How came you to enter so unobserved—did no one hear you?" enquired Isabel, while she prepared the cups.

"Yes, Stenson was without: but I preferred announcing myself. Besides, this place is so empty and deserted, that one need have no fear of meeting any one. Tyringsholm is much altered already, and it will soon be again what it was at the time of the death of my grandfather. The long suite of state apartments, which my uncle fitted up so gorgeously, will doubtless have long to moulder in undisturbed repose, before they again ring to the sounds of joyous voices at some festive meeting."

A slight sigh was Isabel's only answer, and for a few minutes they remained silent.

"Drink your tea, dear Richard," said she at length, "it will warm you, and do you good."

"It can scarcely do that," said he, gazing upon her with a look of unutterable sadness. "I cannot help recalling the past, and think how often, long ago, you used to make my tea in this very room. But it was different then, when every cup


was enlivened by some gay thought or merry jest. Oh, Isabel, is it possible that we can be the same people, seated at the same table, in the same room? Mirth and happiness are vanished, and you expect that a mere cup of tea can do me good!"

"Am *I* not still here to make it for you?" replied she, in a tone of gentle reproof.

"That is indeed true; and therefore I suppose the tea ought to have the same properties as formerly."

This, however, did not appear to be the case, for both finished in silence the meal which was associated with so many memories of the past; and then Richard, feeling that he could no longer control his emotion, retired into the adjoining room, closed the door, and flung himself down upon the sofa.

And where was now his apparent calmness? It served but to afford fresh evidence of the fact, that a thousand good resolutions are powerless to withstand one single hour of temptation. For seven long months Richard had striven, with firm and steadfast determination, to stem the progress of the evil, and had at length convinced himself that he had attained strength sufficient to encounter a meeting—a reunion—which should last until the final separation. Dr. Manning's letter, in which he had made no secret of Isabel's alarming state, had confirmed him in his resolution to return home. The goal after which he had so



anxiously striven, was now attained—he had seen her again—the no longer dazzling, but still beautiful, Isabel—he had seen her, and the first quarter of an hour that he had passed in her society was more than sufficient to convince him, that even in death she would still exercise the same power over him.

But her peace must not be disturbed; he had deceived himself, but she must not be deceived in him; for had he not assured her, at the first moment of their reunion, that he was not come to destroy her tranquillity by any outbursts of passion? and he must keep his word. His grief had long been silent and concealed, but now it broke forth aloud. He strove to make a compact with his heart, and it no longer offered any vigorous resistance, for it was well nigh reduced to ashes.

And how shall we describe the maternal joy and anxiety which succeeded each other in rapid alternation on the countenance of Baroness Ebba, as, speechless with astonishment and alarm, she clasped her son to her bosom? What delight to have him once more near her, and yet how painful to witness the ravages, both physical and mental, that had been wrought by so brief an interval of absence! A mother, who beholds a hopeful and promising son beaming with health and happiness, transformed into a mere shadow; his youthful energy, upon which she had founded such sanguine hopes, withered in the bud; all his



powers, all his enjoyment of life, the very essence of his being, destroyed, and swallowed up in one master passion,—a mother who beholds this has to endure a bitter trial, one with which few others can compare.

The next morning arrived his father, sister, and brother-in-law. They all endeavoured to conceal their consternation at the change they beheld, but in this they succeeded but imperfectly; for daylight was not more favourable to Richard's appearance than dusk and moonshine. The same pang thrilled through the hearts of all. He gently but decidedly declined the urgent invitations of both his mother and Virginie to rest awhile after his journey either at Tjällstorp or Svärdsö, and two of the spare rooms were therefore made ready for his occupation, for he would not again inhabit the apartment in the wing which had formerly been appropriated to him.

"You have not yet given us one word of congratulation!" said Virginie, leading her brother into the recess of the window.

"You must pardon my omission, dear Virginie. I have not yet familiarized myself with the idea of all these changes. But you cannot doubt my having long since offered up, in my heart, the warmest prayers for your happiness and for that of your husband."

"And yet you will not come and witness that happiness! If I could only persuade you to return with us to Svärdsö,—it is not good for you to stay here!"

"Tyringsholm is my home, and, therefore, I wish to stay here; but I shall soon see yours also. My dearest sister! you cannot but perceive that Isabel,"—and he lowered his voice to a whisper,—“will not be with us long. How, then, can you require of me, who have travelled all this distance in order to be with her, that I should leave her again of my own accord?”

"For God's sake, what do you mean?" faltered Virginie. "Isabel will not be with us long? She is really too incomprehensible! Do you suppose we have ever heard one word of that which she conceals in the depths of her heart? And I do think she ought not to be so self-willed in this respect. We have deserved more confidence at her hands!" and Virginie hastily wiped the tears from her eyes.

"You misunderstand her," said Richard. "She wished to spare you as well as herself the pain of such an announcement, and of the consequent exhibition of feminine weakness, from which her strong spirit shrinks. I was aware of her situation long before I set out on my journey; I carried with me this consuming anxiety,—the deadly fear,—lest she should have been summoned hence before my return: and never have I known one moment's rest."

With sorrowful forebodings, Virginie clasped his burning hand within her own. "Oh!" said she, "if I could but understand her heart!"

“ The noblest and proudest that ever beat in woman’s breast !”

“ But has it any warmth ?” Virginie would have asked, but she refrained. Neither she nor Richard knew how warm a heart it was.

CHAPTER XVI.

DAY after day succeeded each other, and every time that the sun rose and set, he took with him a portion of the pale Isabel's life. Yet, when the trees put forth their opening leaves, she still lay there upon her crimson sofa, to greet once more the reviving green of spring. And who was it who, with such unwearied faithfulness, maintained his post at her side throughout the whole long winter? — who, but Richard! — Richard, who no longer spoke to her of love, though, in every look, in every gesture, glowed a spark of the mighty flame which burned on, unquenchable, even to the confines of the tomb.

Yet let no one picture to themselves this winter as a gloomy and melancholy period, passed in the atmosphere, and amidst the sighs and lamentations, of a sick room. It was far otherwise. So long as she belonged to this world, Isabel desired to see life and cheerfulness around her. From her airy and sunny boudoir, she removed everything which could suggest the thoughts of death,

which she reserved for her solitary meditations and sleepless nights. Her dress gave token of even greater care than at her first arrival at Tyringsholm, and those colours were carefully avoided which formed too strong a contrast with the altered character of her beauty—for, changed as it was, it was still beauty. The windows of this, her favourite apartment, were adorned with a perfect garden of flowers of every hue, amongst which a couple of canary-birds disported themselves and twittered their joyous songs. They were Richard's present to her, and, in his absence, were her favourite companions.

Richard's intercourse with Isabel had, also, completely laid aside the character of melancholy which had marked it on the first evening of their meeting, when the painful surprise of beholding so great a change in each other had produced so distressing an effect upon them both. This impression was weakened, if not destroyed, by daily intercourse; and as Isabel gradually resumed the tone of playful intimacy which they had before used towards each other, Richard also reverted to his former happy character, of the "epitome of everything expressed and unexpressed,"—a sort of combination of cousin, friend, brother, and lover, in which all these different parts were so admirably balanced, that not one of them could boast of any preponderance over the rest. There were moments, even, in which they both felt happy, notwithstanding the certain knowledge of

that which lay before them, of which, however, they never spoke.

Isabel's last work was a sword-belt for Richard, and while she was busy with it he entertained her with accounts of what he had seen in Switzerland, or else read to her aloud. Often, however, he would stop to smooth and arrange the cushions against which she occasionally leaned back. If, however, he lingered too long over the operation, Isabel would smile, and say with something like her little coquetry of old: "Be so kind, my good sir, as not to smooth all the horsehair out of my cushions, but draw your chair farther this way, and continue your reading without interruption!"

On such occasions Richard's eyes would beam with a brightness which recalled the bygone days of his happiness; he did not see how transparent was the hand which he grasped and pressed to his lips.

His eyes were blinded, and he could not perceive the rising and setting of the sun.

Once more the breeze whispered in the summits of the lime-trees, and the fates still spun the frail thread of Isabel's life; but all could see that the spindle would soon be filled.

Her increasing sufferings struggled more and more fiercely to obtain the upper hand; but she withstood them still, for whenever she should be obliged finally to abandon her sofa in the red boudoir, she must also take leave of Richard.

When the moment came in which the body should assert its mastery over the spirit, Isabel desired to be seen by no one who would be a partaker of her agonies.

For three days her sufferings had been intense. It was so hard to bid farewell to the friend whose imploring looks seemed to say, "Do not leave me! do not go from me!" And for his sake she lingered still, in order by this unparalleled effort to reward the fortitude which during the whole of this long winter, to him at once so happy and so deeply miserable, had never once forsaken him, and even now gave him power to conceal the anguish of his soul.

But Isabel felt that hers was exhausted. On the fourth day, when Dr. Manning appeared in answer to her summons by letter, to pay his second visit since the autumn, her rigidly compressed lips could scarcely restrain a cry of agony.

"Surely it must be almost over?" said she to the Doctor, while her eyes seemed to entreat the confirmation of her hope.

They were alone.

"And you sincerely wish it?" asked the Doctor, with emotion, as he took her thin, powerless hand in his.

"I do, from the bottom of my soul."

"Then I can give you the satisfaction of knowing that your time is very short. There is but little work left for the disease to do."

"And will the close be as terrible as this—perhaps even more so?"

The Doctor shook his head.

"For the last two years I have suffered; but of late it has been more than I can describe. Do you know of nothing, Doctor, which can still this agony? Give me one day of rest in which I may be able to collect my thoughts."

"I will do so! All hope is now at an end." These last words were spoken as if to himself.

Isabel pressed his hand with a grateful look.

"Let it be soon, then," whispered she.

The following night she slept sweetly, after taking the prescribed medicine, and awoke in the morning in a condition which, compared to that of the previous days, was one of delightful ease. She purposed making good use of these hours of respite, first to have an interview with her mother, and then to take leave of *him*.

"Dear Mary," said Isabel, as the latter as usual assisted her to plait the rich tresses of her soft dark hair, "I shall dress to-day for the last time! You must, therefore, attire me as well as you can. Let me have one of my white gowns; the one with the prettiest lace trimming. Perhaps I ought not to wear a white one;" and she cast an inquiring glance at the mirror. "I think, however, that will be the best. How do you think I look to-day?"

Mary turned away, pretending that she had dropped a comb, in order to conceal her tears.

"Do not give yourself so much trouble, Mary; for I can see in the glass that which you would

hide from me. You, doubtless, think that I look like a living corpse. I am very pale, it is true, but still there comes a tinge of colour now and then when I speak. Dear Mary, pray smooth my hair down a little lower; give me the comb, I will place it myself as I wish it to be. Look, that is much better; it conceals the hollowness of my cheeks."

Her hair being dressed, she put on a white slip, and over it a loose *peignoir*, the light and airy folds of which adapted themselves admirably to her still graceful and lofty figure.

"Mary," said she, when she had finished, "this dress is yours; you must keep it for my sake. And now, as I am still able to speak of that which I have at heart, I require from you a promise—a solemn promise, which must not be broken. After the spirit has fled, I bequeath my body to your guardianship; and you must requite my confidence by not suffering any one to behold me from the moment that my eyes are closed, except my mother and the Doctor. It is necessary, for the benefit of science, that Dr. Manning should have me at his disposal for a few hours; but, after that, when you have spread the white veil over my face, no one must again lift it, least of all Richard! I forbid you to leave him any opportunity of beholding me as a corpse!"

"For God's sake, do not exact such a promise from me! How will it be in my power to prevent him?"

"No, dearest Mary, I cannot dispense with it; you must keep the key of the chamber of death, and tell him that such was my will! I do not think he would disregard it. And now let us speak of something else—of your future happiness!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mary, "how can I think of that now!"

"It will be increased by my death. A character like that of Klas Malchus sets no value upon wealth, but has need of it, nevertheless, because he would never be able to reconcile himself to the idea which a poor man with a family ought to keep constantly before his eyes—namely, that of the necessity of exerting himself to earn his livelihood. As he will now inherit my fortune, he will, even without the estate of Tyringsholm, be a wealthy man, and, with you, Mary, a happy one also; for you have an excellent heart—a calm and clear judgment—and are in fact altogether better suited to him than any one else could possibly be. You must promise me, moreover, to be indulgent to his peculiarities, which will probably increase with advancing years—teach him to love life, and to be happy in it—and do not let him forget his sister."

Mary was too much overcome to be able to reply.

"And now let me thank you for all that you have been to me during the past year. You have won my warmest sisterly affection; and I am sure

that many a moonlight night will remind you of those through which we have watched together. But I will not agitate you further! Mary, you must now be everything to our poor mother, until Klas returns to surround you both with his affection. But did I not hear a door open? They are expecting me. No doubt it is Richard. Give me my red shawl."

She hastily poured a few drops of perfume into a crystal cup filled with water, and, having bathed her hands in it, she received her glittering rings from Mary. Even for this last time it gave her pleasure to arrange them tastefully.

A short time later, on that same morning, we find her again lying on her favourite sofa, bathed in the magic light which streamed through the crimsoned curtains. Her pale countenance was illumined by an expression of peace which words are powerless to pourtray. It was the peace of the soul, that was manifested in the clear blue eye, in the soft smile that played upon her lip; and her manner to all who approached her was so winning, so affectionate, that, for the first and last time, it appeared to invite perfect confidence, perfect intimacy. She appeared to them faultless; and they loved her better than ever, now that it could only serve to make them feel her loss the more.

Richard had not yet made his appearance; he had gone out alone, in order to arm himself with courage for this last struggle. Isabel took advan-

tage of his absence to have a long and confidential conversation with her mother.

Its particulars we will not record; suffice it to say that, at its close, the Baroness felt that she had never before fully appreciated the heart and character of her high minded daughter. Her grief on learning that she must be deprived of this treasure was excessive—but Isabel knew how to administer such words of consolation as succeeded in soothing her so long, at least, as the tones of that sweet voice fell upon the mother's ear. When all was over, she was not the only person to whom life appeared dark and desolate—not the only one whose bitter grief vented itself in tears. And happy are they who can thus find relief!

When Isabel was once more alone, her thoughts turned exclusively upon him, who had held such undivided empire in her soul, and who even now, when she stood upon the limit which divides time from eternity, could make her heart beat with a vehemence which wasted her remaining strength. Claspings her hands together, she whispered, "Oh that I may not now falter! The separation will be a long one, but I must not die like a heroine of romance; I must not have pent up all these feelings within my own bosom, in order to overwhelm him with them at the close. No! these last moments must be dedicated to an object worthy alike of him and of me. My God, my Father, from my heart I thank thee that thou

hast given me courage to renounce this earthly happiness! How much bitterer would not the parting now be——if——”

Richard's knock was heard at the door. “Come in,” said she, softly, and the next moment he was seated on the corner of the sofa beside her, clasping her hand within his own. His eye glanced over her graceful and beautiful form, and perhaps even at that moment it afforded her a secret satisfaction to observe the admiration which beamed in his gaze.

“I have waited long without,” said he, with a sigh.

“My dearest Richard,” replied she, gently, and in a tone so indescribably clear and sweet, that it seemed like an echo of the melodies of a better world, “do you not know that we often wait and long for that from which, when obtained, we would in vain seek to recoil? This is our last interview. I feel that, after to-day, I shall leave my bed no more. I have struggled against this necessity as long as it was possible, but I must yield at last.”

“Our last interview!” exclaimed Richard, in a deep, hollow tone; and the passionate anguish with which he clasped his arm around her waist gave her exquisite pain.

“Not thus! not thus!” entreated she, in a low voice. “Now, Richard, is the time for firmness. Rise—you must not lie thus prostrate! sit down beside me!”

He drew a chair forward and obeyed. "Only do not say that this is our last interview! you must not—you cannot die yet! no, no, it is impossible!"

"I may perhaps live a few days longer, Richard,—but this is our last interview, nevertheless; for who knows what I may then be equal to?"

He covered his face with both his hands. "I am then alone! You will leave me. I shall never see you more, never more hear your voice—Isabel, Isabel, that sweet voice which had power to make me happy, even in the midst of all my sorrow."

"Then listen to that voice, Richard, while it is still able to speak with you—and you will remember my last words, will you not, my own dear friend?"

"Yes, I will remember them, but it will be only for a little while—for you know that I cannot long survive you. But, oh, Isabel, tell me—now that it can do you neither good nor harm, that I should place such a constraint upon my feelings—tell me how you could leave me a prey to such fearful sufferings? Or do you believe, that, during all this long winter-time, my love has lain dormant? If you do, look at me, and tell me if I am not the mere shadow of him who once offered you a heart, which then throbbed with the fulness of life and love, a heart which you disdained! I have endeavoured to tear your image from it, but it is too firmly rooted there; and at times the dream has again come over me, which I acknowledged to you when we parted last summer—the

dream that, although your lips were silent, you yet loved me far otherwise than you chose to acknowledge. And, if this were so, Isabel, if it were so, the thought is, even now, one of wild delight! Give me this assurance, and our union shall be more blessed in death than in life!"

"Compose yourself, Richard, I entreat, and do not bend over me thus,—you suffocate me!" whispered Isabel, overcome by a feeling of death-like faintness. "How can you be so vehement! Give me time to recover myself."

He rose and paced once or twice up and down the room; and then, as if even this exertion were painful to him, he rested his arm against the door-post and leaned his burning forehead against it, while his eyes watched every feeble movement of Isabel.

After a few minutes, she beckoned him again to approach her.

"Isabel," entreated he, in a voice trembling with emotion, "I am no longer vehement; I am quite calm! Be kind to your poor Richard. Give me one word of healing consolation! Tell me that you have loved me above all things!"

"No, Richard, you must abandon this vision which I cannot confirm. I have loved you more than a friend—more than a brother—but I had another and a higher goal."

A sigh of unutterable bitterness heaved Richard's bosom, but he was silent.

"Your goal, Richard," said she, after a brief

pause, "is appointed you upon earth—it is a brilliant and a noble one; and when the days of mourning are past, you will revive once more, and will arouse yourself to a new existence."

He shook his head despondingly.

"I can assure you, in all truth, that the power of the will is much greater, both over body and mind, than we have any idea of, until we have verified the fact by experience. Hitherto a constant, though vain, hope has, in your case, counteracted this power. But, when I am no longer on earth, when you have no hope left to cling to,—then I must indeed have been deceived in you, my noble, high-minded Richard, if I could not foresee, with certainty, that your very sorrow will lead to the full development of your powers. I do not expect that now, with your present overwrought feelings, you should understand me; but the day will come when you will do so—of that I am convinced! My memory will then be to you as a friendly and a guiding star; and every time that you look up to it, you will think, not in the heat of passion, but with still and calm satisfaction, that you hear my voice whispering its approval in your ear."

"These are idle words, Isabel! That time will never come!"

"Yes, it will come, even though it tarry long. I will not abandon this hope at any price. You, who have loved me so fondly, would surely not have me die in the terrible conviction that I had

destroyed the peace of your soul, the welfare of your whole future life. And therefore, not for your own sake, Richard, but for mine, I ask you to promise me, that you will not weakly succumb beneath the trial that awaits you! Will you not give me that promise?"

"And to what purpose, Isabel? It would be but to deceive you."

"No, Richard, you will not deceive me. It is often, most often perhaps, some deep sorrow that gives birth to that strength of character, which afterwards distinguishes the lives of those who have been sorely tried in the season of youth. You have suffered much, Richard, and you have still, doubtless, much to suffer; but I know there is in you so much that is good and noble, that I cannot abandon my hope. I have often looked forward with pride to your future lot—it will not disappoint my anticipations. And now, my own dear Richard, I implore you, by the love you have borne me in life, to fulfil my dearest wish when my lips shall be closed in death. And this wish, this prayer, the fulfilment of which I ask as the strongest proof of your attachment—without which, I cannot die in peace—is that you will give me your solemn promise to struggle manfully against your grief, and not to suffer the demon of despair to annihilate the fruit of all my efforts, which were directed solely to the welfare of your future life!"

Isabel's words were uttered with an earnest-

ness and energy, of which her white lips, and wasted frame, would have appeared incapable. For one instant a bright flush mantled on her cheek, and her eyes beamed and glistened through a mist of tears. She extended her hands imploringly towards him—for she knew that the promise once given, he would at least endeavour not to break it.

Deep was the sorrow, agonizing the internal conflict, depicted on Richard's countenance. The brightness of his eye was like that of a half-extinguished brand, which blazes up, and again sinks down, then blazes up afresh, but each time more feebly. "Oh!" murmured he, at length, "let me die; suffer me to die!" Her hands sank down powerless on her lap, and two large tears rolled silently over her cheeks, though not one word of reproach escaped her lips. He felt he should be unworthy of her if he grieved her thus. Could he draw tears from her eyes, even in the hour of death!

"Isabel! Isabel!" whispered he, "your tears shall not be shed in vain. I will—I will strive to obey you!"

A gleam of more than earthly love flashed in Isabel's eyes. "My Richard, my beloved, my noble Richard, you have given me, even here below, a foretaste of paradise. Now I am content, I can die in peace; and if it be permitted for the dead to pray for the living, I will pray that you may find a heart which may make

amends to you for the loss of mine. Here on earth I could not do so—the knowledge that you lived for me alone was all too precious to me.”

Richard knelt down beside her. Their arms were clasped around each other—their lips met; it was the last struggle between love and death. Isabel sank senseless on his bosom. A low cry, which burst from his lips, summoned the Doctor to her assistance. Richard was removed, almost by force, from the room, and she was carried to the bed whence she rose no more.

No description of Isabel's last hours shall find place here. What was the precise nature of the malady by which she was cut off in the flower of her youth, it is needless to explain. We respect her wish, and seek not to lift the veil beneath which she shrouded her sufferings.

The night before her remains were committed to the dust, a figure was seen to glide across the court towards the left wing. It was Richard, who, having passed all the intervening period in Isabel's pavilion, was now come to take one last farewell of her. In accordance with her wish, all his entreaties to be suffered to see her had been in vain; and now he had stolen from Mary's room the key of the chamber of death, and clutching the treasure in his hand, he passed from the balmy atmosphere of the mild summer night, into the gloomy dwelling of the dead.

When he had turned the key in the lock, he paused, and looked back; the faint crimson light of dawn fell upon his pale, awe-stricken features, and witnessed the struggle within. He appeared to hesitate. Could he now disobey her, for the first time? But the temptation was too mighty. He must enter; but he vowed to himself not to raise the cloth which covered her face.

At first his head swam round, so that he could scarcely distinguish the surrounding objects; but at length he took up a lamp, and, drawing near, contemplated the reclining figure, wrapped in its white shroud. A shudder passed over his frame, and thrilled to his very soul. He set down the lamp, and bent over the lifeless form of Isabel.

"Forgive me, forgive me," murmured he, while his white lips quivered, and his eyes burned with "a fire that seemed almost like that of impending insanity. "Isabel, forgive me! I have but come to tell you, that I will strive to keep my promise!" Half unconsciously he laid his hand upon the lace folds of the chemisette that covered her bosom, and a pin gave way, disclosing a black riband which had lain carefully concealed within them. He drew it forth, and discovered a locket attached to it. What could it contain? it must be some secret. If she should have loved another before she knew him—If in death she bore upon her heart the image of a man who in life had prevented her from requiting his devotion? The blood began to boil in

Richard's veins; he tore open the locket, turned a portrait towards the light, and discovered—his own image!—On the back Isabel's hand had traced the words: "*Not in life, but in death!*"

How bright a ray now broke upon the darkness of Richard's soul—only after death might he learn fully to appreciate the lofty spirit which had so lately governed the lifeless dust beside which he stood. "Isabel, Isabel!" was his exulting thought; "you did then love me—and yet rejected your own happiness, in order to save me from a yet deeper abyss of misery! Unequaled as you are, I understand you now, and understand the sacrifice which you have made. It was one worthy of you—and I too will show myself worthy of you! If you now look down upon me from the heaven where you dwell, be not displeased that a breath of happiness should have reached me even here. The confession of your love from your living lips would have wrought up my feelings to the wildest intensity of passion—now, wrested from death itself, it diffuses the balm of peace over my stricken heart!" And his tears fell fast and freely over Isabel's ice-cold hands, while an expression of holy calm and fortitude overspread his countenance.

"Farewell now, my own pale bride! I leave thee to repose! Sleep sweetly, sleep in peace! The angels of heaven are smiling their welcome upon thee, as thou wilt one day smile upon me when I have fulfilled the task which thou hast

laid upon me, and come to claim my reward! Farewell! Farewell!"

Mary awoke at sunrise, and her first glance at the table beside her bed showed her that the key of the sanctuary which had been entrusted to her guardianship was missing. She started up in alarm, feeling that there was but one person who could have taken it at such an hour—dressed herself with all speed, and hastened across the court to the left wing. The door of the chamber she sought stood ajar, the lamp was gone out, only a faint twilight reigned within—but the light, streaming through the open door, revealed to her a singular spectacle.


Richard half kneeling on the ground was sleeping peacefully, his head supported by his arm, which rested upon the edge of Isabel's coffin.

"Good Heavens, the locket!" exclaimed Mary, anxiously to herself. "I am sure I concealed it exactly according to her directions."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE reader must excuse us if we here break off the thread of our narrative, and resume it after a lapse of eight years from the period at which our last chapter ended.

It is a bright, still summer evening shortly before sunset; and before us lies a scene of which the simple beauty harmonises well with the personages which animate it. In the foreground, surrounded by hedges of flowering seringa stands a small white-washed house, with a dovecote on one gable, and a row of bee-hives on the other. The neat little garden is traversed by a murmuring brook, which, below the sanded yard, widens into a little pond, upon which a couple of snow-white geese are disporting themselves. The approach to the house, leading up a slight acclivity, is edged by a few raspberry bushes, and the faintness of the wheel track shows it to be rarely used by carriages. The attractions which nature has



bestowed upon the spot have been but little aided by art. The small domain is bounded on the one side by a wood-covered mountain, while in the opposite direction rises the parish church, by the side of a lake, surrounded by a range of blue hills, which terminate the prospect.

But now let us traverse the red-painted fence which encloses the court and garden.

On a bench, in front of this rustic dwelling, within the open windows of which may be detected a profusion of roses and geraniums, are seated two men in earnest conversation. The one, a thin and spare old man, is passing his pipe, from which he frequently takes a luxurious whiff, alternately from his right to his left hand, to shield it from any dangerous collision with a somewhat boisterous urchin who is striving to climb upon his knees; while his companion, a still young man—although his stooping figure and huge tuft of long black hair make him appear older than he really is—puffs away vigorously at a cigar, occasionally passing his fingers thoughtfully through his overshadowing locks.

In the garden, at a little distance from the two gentlemen, stands a rustic table, upon which is displayed an equally rustic supper, duly arranged by a young and very pretty woman, beside whom stand two little fair-haired maidens, impatiently waiting to receive each a piece of toast from their mother's hand, while some white doves, attracted by the crumbs from their dwelling in the roof, are fluttering around them.

"Dear Ebba—dear Clara," said their mother, gently, "do not be so restless! You have given the doves quite enough for to-night; and now be quiet, for I think papa and your uncle are coming—no, they have resumed their conversation. Well, then, here is a plateful of mashed apple for you; and now go and sit down quietly upon the bench yonder until I call you."

The children, each holding the plate with one hand, and a piece of bread in the other, went to the place assigned them; and their mother, after smiling her approval upon them, quitted the table, and advanced towards the gentlemen.

The principal figures we have here described will be easily recognized. Klas Malchus was now a happy husband and father, surrounded by his little family, of which, for some years past, his old friend, Professor O——, of Upsala, had formed a part. Professor O—— was the same person concerning whose old coat he had once written to his father, that, were it bequeathed to him, he should value it more highly than Tyringsholm itself; and, as the tastes of Baron Klas Malchus were by no means changeable, it is easy to imagine how happy he was, now that not only the coat, but its revered owner himself, were become his property; the learned man having been persuaded to pass the remaining years of his life in Klas Malchus's house, a concession which was amply repaid by the affection and respect of which he there became the object.

It would have been scarcely possible to find two people better suited as companions to each other than Baron Klas and Professor O——. They shared the same tastes, the same habits, the same studies, the same dislike of the world; and to compare notes and converse together on all these topics, made them as happy as two men could be.

Meanwhile, Mary had not the heart to disturb them, by the announcement that supper was ready. She was aware how little her husband, whom she loved and honoured with all her heart, cared for such things in comparison with his especial pleasures, and, therefore, she waited patiently till some accident should attract his attention.

It seemed as if fate intended to favour her, for Klas Malchus looking up, perceived her, and answering her good-humoured glance of appeal by a friendly nod, was about to rise, when unfortunately, Professor O—— broached a new subject, which at once turned all Baron Klas's thoughts into another channel; he puffed away more zealously than ever at a fresh cigar, and it was not until it was burned out, that Klas Malchus again looked up and perceived that both his wife and children had disappeared.

"Dear me," said he, in a tone of some vexation, "they have left us; we must have suffered ourselves to be too deeply absorbed in our subject, it is nearly dark."

"I beg your pardon, my love," continued the Baron, as he perceived his wife approaching with a good-humoured smile. "I now remember that your eyes have been long since summoning me; but as usual, dearest Mary, you must have patience with me! Are the little ones already gone to bed?"

"Yes, and the best thing we can do now is to let them go to sleep."

"No, no, they must not be disappointed of their cake. Give me a piece of it; we shall not think it any the worse for having been cut," and with the rice cake laid on a slice of bread instead of a plate, Klas Malchus hastened into the house, and took his way to a room, in which stood two little beds with snow-white curtains, side by side. It would have done any one's heart good to see how his eyes brightened as he turned first to one and then to the other of his beautiful children, dividing his treasure between them, receiving and returning their caresses, and kissing the little white hands that played with his long hair.

He loved his children, not, indeed, foolishly, but still very dearly, and they stood towards him in a position widely different from that which he had himself held towards his father.

Klas Malchus had now attained that which appeared to him the height of human felicity; he was at peace with himself and with the whole world, of which latter, however, he knew no more than he had done in former days. His world was

his home, and how much did it comprise; an adored wife, who had in no way disappointed his hopes; an esteemed friend, whose society was delightful to him; three hopeful and engaging children; and, lastly, an independent fortune, which, owing to the moderate expenses of the family, was constantly increasing, and of this, for the sake of his children's education and future prospects, he was glad.

One only sorrow had overshadowed his path during the last seven years, the death of his beloved mother. But this wound was now healed.

After supper, when Professor O—— had gone to bed, Klas Malchus and his wife remained seated together on the sofa in their pleasant little drawing-room. Such hours were the happiest of Mary's life, for in them she felt that her husband belonged exclusively to her, and in such moments of confidential intercourse they often reverted to the past, or looked with thankfulness upon the present, and with hope towards the future.

"This day three years," said Mary, with a sigh, "my dear father died. He could not long survive my mother; but, thank God, they had much to make them happy in their lifetime."

"Yes," replied Klas Malchus, taking Mary's hand in his, "this is a memorable month."

"Indeed, it is," said Mary, wiping away a tear. "Isabel——"

"I wish I had been at home," resumed Klas;

"I wish I could have seen her once more. She was far superior to the common run of women, and as such was she regretted."

"Yes, Richard did indeed grieve deeply for her, and Heaven knows whether he has ever ceased to do so, although things are now so altered. How happy it would make her to know that he has so distinguished himself. They say he is to be made a chamberlain. Baroness Ebba herself mentioned it the last time she was here."

"Richard a chamberlain? No, dear Mary, thank Heaven that is not likely. You know that his brilliant speeches in the House of Assembly shows the independence of his spirit, the maturity of his judgment, and, above all, the warmth and benevolence of his heart; but he does not support the court and the nobles, and, therefore, he will surely not choose to be made a chamberlain."

"No, I dare say not. But I wonder whether he ever thinks of marrying? It would be a good thing if he were to do so, for he leads a lonely life at Tydingsholm, when he is at home."

"If he should think so, God grant that he may find a good wife, and one that may make him happy. But for a man who has loved Isabel, it must be difficult to make another choice. Have you got the newspapers, Mary?—for although I think nothing so tiresome as Parliamentary debates, I should like to know whether his last motion was carried."

"The papers are all in my bedroom. But

now let me tell you a piece of news. Do you know that the M——'s are going to put their projected journey to Stockholm into execution. I have this evening received a note from Virginie to say, they will come here on Saturday to say good-bye to us."

"I am very glad to hear it; we shall then soon see Richard again. I long for the day when we shall once more welcome our friends here; for although Tydingsholm, since it has belonged to him, has been much pleasanter than it used to be, I can never feel so happy there as in our dear little home. Faugh! how miserable I should be in those large gloomy apartments! Thank God for having delivered me from the burden of it!"

"Yes, Klas, I fully believe that to have been a most fortunate event for you. You would never have taken the same interest in the management of the property that our dear Captain has done. (Richard had attained this rank some years before.) His alterations and experiments have improved it immensely."

"I have no doubt of it. He is active, and likes those sort of speculations. He will be a very rich man in time, although no one can be more liberal. But now, dear Mary, it is time to go to bed; you cannot think how pleased the little things were with their cake. I do not know whether my fondness for them blinds me, but I, who never could endure flattery, am pleased now when people praise their beauty and attractions.

Ebba is like you, but Clara—that is really a wonderful likeness——”

“Clara,” said Mary, with her own sweetest smile, “will be another Isabel, and will assuredly outshine Ebba.”

“I do not say that; for you, too, my Mary, are beautiful, and gentle which is better, and I hope our little Ebba will grow up just the same. But Clara——Richard used to play with her, and carry her about for hours together, and there was something in his countenance all the time which convinced me that he had made the same observation that we have. But dear me, what o'clock is that?—half-past eleven! We have talked quite enough for this evening.”

And so, passing his arm round her waist, Klas Malchus led his wife up-stairs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN an apartment in the Hotel de France, in Government-street, sat Countess Virginie von M——, a few weeks after her arrival at Stockholm, trying on and examining the quality of a packet of expensive gloves that lay on a table before her. Her toilette did not seem intended for a great dinner, still less for sitting at home. She might, perhaps, be going to some little party for which elegance rather than ceremony was required.

Virginie's countenance, though still as engaging as ever, expressed at this moment a slight shade of annoyance. And as she, the Countess, threw aside each successive pair of gloves, which poor Virginie L—— would have treated with far more respect, she glanced up at the clock with a look of weariness. At last she rose to give her dress one last inspection before the glass, but after she had altered the position of a flower or

two in her little coiffure, there was nothing further to be done. She paced once or twice up and down the room, murmuring an air from the Freischütz, then took up a book and read a couple of pages, and, just as her patience was quite exhausted, she heard quick steps in the ante-room, and the door was flung hastily open. "At last!" exclaimed she, without attempting to conceal a slight touch of impatience. "I thought you were going to stay all night in the House of Assembly. What an hour to go out to dinner! I am sure it will be five o'clock before we get to the Thiergarten."

These words were addressed to two gentlemen who at that moment entered the room, in one of whom it was easy to recognize Count Pontus von M——. He appeared rather younger than older for the eight years that had passed over his head, while to the gentleman-like refinement for which he had always been distinguished was added a degree of lively animation which had dispelled his former gravity.

His companion, Captain Richard E——brand, on the other hand, appeared considerably changed from the lively, high-spirited, impetuous youth that we remember him at the commencement of our narrative, and still more so from the pale and shattered victim of a passionate and ill-fated attachment, that we last beheld. His noble countenance no longer bore the disturbing impress of inward storms. His

open forehead appeared to be the seat of calm and lofty thought. His eyes, if they no longer flashed with the fire of youth, beamed with kindly energy, and there was nothing in their expression that indicated gloom or melancholy. His tall and active figure had acquired greater strength and muscular development, and this, together with his moustache and whiskers, gave him a more manly and military appearance. He was, upon the whole, handsomer than in former days, yet one could not help missing his early enthusiasm and animation; he was no longer a youth, but a man who had left behind him the joys of his opening life, yet went forward with a good courage in the strength of another hope. The time was come which Isabel had predicted with such exulting certainty. He had found an object in the active direction of his powers towards the common good; but her place in his heart had never been filled up.

"My dear little ungracious wife," said the Count, smiling, "you would not wonder at us if you could have any idea of the interest of the debate which detained us. Imagine, in the first place——"

"For pity's sake, spare me," exclaimed Virginie, gaily, "here,"—and she pointed to the book she had just laid aside, the translation of an English novel,—“here I find more politics than I can well get through,—House of Lords, House of Commons, Bills, and perpetual Elections,—so

now let us make haste. I have been ready, and the carriage waiting, this age. It is very nice of you, Richard, to have put on your uniform, as I desired you. I assure you it sets off your outward man to great advantage, and to-day you must call in every possible means to your assistance."

"Of course I could not do otherwise than obey your commands," replied Richard, "though there is nothing I dislike more than to go to a small party in full dress. But now do tell me where you are going to take me, for of that I have no idea."

"I have already told you; to the Thiergarten, to dine with an old friend."

"But I cannot remember that any acquaintance of ours, much less a friend, ever lived in the Thiergarten."

"Ah, one can never tell!" Virginie exchanged a smiling glance with her husband, which proved that the years which had passed had wrought no diminution in their conjugal confidence; and a few minutes after they were on their way to the Thiergarten, where the coachman was directed to stop before the door of a pretty and tasteful little villa.

"I must tell you, Richard," whispered Virginie, as she descended from the carriage, "that you are not invited; I have brought you entirely on my own responsibility."

The glass doors of the saloon were thrown

open, and a lady, dressed in mourning, came forward to receive her guests. She appeared to be four, or, at the utmost, five and twenty,—an age which is, with many women, that of their greatest beauty, when they have attained their full development, both mental and physical. Her features were delicate, her complexion transparent, her countenance open as the day; while the smile with which she received her guests showed a most attractive combination of pleasure and confusion.

“Dear Hedda, would you have recognized my brother?” asked Virginie, after the first greetings were over.

“Scarcely,” replied she, once more turning her eyes upon Richard. “Indeed, Captain E——brand is——”

“As much changed as time itself,” rejoined he. “Recollect that nine years have intervened between the day on which I took leave of Mademoiselle Hedda von D—— and that on which I have the pleasure of renewing my acquaintance with Madame von Brude. The surprise has been a most welcome and agreeable one to me!”

The frank and cordial tone in which these words were spoken was, however, tinged with sadness, for many a recollection of the past arose within his heart; “but,” thought he, “all such youthful fancies have, no doubt, long since been forgotten by this beautiful woman, who has, since these dreams were dispelled, become acquainted

with the realities of life under widely different circumstances."

But these realities had not, in Hedda's case, been very brilliant ones. While she does the honours of her dinner table to her guests, we will return to the time when we last saw her, and enquire "whether the sapling shoot" ever flourished again.



CHAPTER XIX.

FOR some time after her last meeting with Richard, a shadow hung over the heart of the youthful Hedda. Her diary gave her no pleasure, for every time that she looked at the place where she had been interrupted by the Colonel's carriage driving into the court, came the bitter memory that she had then had a hope which now no longer existed for her.

The news of Isabel's death produced a deep and singular impression upon her mind. She grieved for the beautiful and noble creature, whose fortitude and courage Virginie so eloquently described in her letters; but at the same time she envied her for having died so deeply lamented by him, for whom Hedda would gladly have laid down her life, had he but loved her; and for whose sake she would, even now, rather die, than drag on a life that appeared to her so dismal and joyless.


But at length came a thought that brought

with it a ray of sunlight to her heart—"Perhaps now that he is free—when once he has got over his sorrow, he may think——" Hedda blushed deeply; her delicacy and maidenly modesty would not suffer her to give words to the thought which yet she continued to cherish.

But there came further tidings from Virginie. Richard had gone away—gone to travel in foreign countries—and would not return for some years. And now Hedda strove to dismiss the dangerous thought which she deemed she ought no longer to encourage, but it pleaded with her still: "When he returns many things will be changed, and then he will come and greet his old friends—and then——"

Thus matters stood for two years; and then Virginie wrote word that Richard had returned, restored in mind and body—returned a different man. How did Hedda's heart beat at this news! But days, weeks, months, a whole year passed away, and nothing more was heard of him. Then Hedda, with many a tear, dismissed from her bosom the deceptive hope which had nestled there, forbidding it ever to return; and she wept no more, but became calm and tranquil; her spirits were better than they had been for some time, for with her hopes she had also bade farewell to her youthful dreams.

Three years had passed away since the evening that she had lain on a mossy bank in the garden, and vented the grief of her childish heart in such



bitter tears; when one evening, as she was again sitting on the same bank, absorbed in thought, she was aroused by a messenger from her father in the person of her old and trusty friend Brandler, who now spent nearly the whole year round at Mörkedal, and who, if he was not the confidant of her sorrow, was nevertheless the person who had come to her assistance with comfort and counsel, lessons and anecdotes, as circumstances might direct.

"All alone, my little lady! Why, you remind me of the white lady in the tale, who used every night to weep a whole tub full of tears; with which, next morning—but I see you are growing impatient; perhaps I have told you the story before? And now I have something more to tell you than an old story. To be brief, my little lady, you have got a proposal."

"A proposal!" How came it that Hedda's cheeks assumed so deep a dye? "Have I, indeed?"

"Yes, indeed; a man of property, with house and land, and something besides, for that matter."

"Do I by any chance know him well? I mean, did I—a long time ago—ever see him?"

"Yes, yes; to be sure; unless your memory is a very bad one."

A trembling sigh, of mingled hope and fear, burst from Hedda's bosom.

The Captain looked at her steadily for a few minutes; then he said: "You had at that time several acquaintances, who have not been here

since; it is, therefore, by no means impossible that you might be mistaken in your guess."

At these words, which were assuredly not uttered without meaning, although spoken in the Captain's usual careless tone, Hedda raised her beautiful eyes to the face of her friend, who had evidently understood her emotion, much as it cost her to acknowledge it. This one look destroyed at once all her hope; the blush gave place to deadly paleness.

"Who is it?" asked she, with forced calmness. The experience of three years had taught her something. She had now a little hypocrisy at command for daily use, although it was but little.

"Are you prepared for any name? The General, who sent me hither to summon you, will, I am sure, not take it amiss if, by giving you some little hint beforehand, I give you time to prepare yourself, and to look at the matter in the most favourable light; for, to speak frankly, I do not well see how you can escape."

"The name, the name! Pray do not keep me in suspense."

"Dear me! do not be so impatient, my little lady. There is no such great hurry about it. However, since you insist upon it, it is the Chamberlain von Brude—who, with the exception of one little episode, has remained faithful to you, and has now, by letter, requested the General's permission to present himself here in person to ask you in marriage."

Prepared as she was, Hedda showed neither surprise nor annoyance. She had earnestly desired to be suffered to pass her life alone with her dreams, if there was no better fate in store for her. But she did not consider that she had a right to insist upon this privilege. She had already tried her father's patience for several years by her refusal of various eligible offers; and now that his old favourite scheme appeared on the point of being realized, she did not see any way of escape open to her.

But why should she seek it? She no longer felt any repugnance to Von Brude. He was simply indifferent to her, as were all other men, except the one of whom she ought not to think. This *one*, who knew that she loved him, and yet did not present himself, evidently scorned her; and it was perhaps time to show him that she was not, as he might perhaps imagine, waiting for him.

Poor Hedda! she attempted no resistance. It might perhaps be a good thing to be cut off from the last possibility of hope. She might then be happier.

At the end of three months the marriage was celebrated. The General was delighted, the bridegroom delighted, and Miss Gunilla likewise delighted. But the Captain coughed and shrugged his shoulders when people talked of the cheerful looks of the bride. Hedda, though she did neither, felt in the depths of her heart how much this outward cheerfulness cost her.

The history of her married life was as commonplace as possible. M. von Brude had no sufficiently marked qualities, either good or bad, to be more to his wife than a wearisome incumbrance; for his temper was easy, and he required nothing except, in the first place, constant attention, not exactly to his comfort, but rather to the specimens of oratory with which he kept himself in practice and sought to astonish her; and, in the second, that she should not interrupt him—in both of which respects Hedda was as amiable and submissive as possible. She was unremitting in the performance of her duties, and indeed she could do no less, seeing that it was not in her power to bestow her affection, which, by the way, the Chamberlain never missed, being perfectly satisfied that, though not exactly adored, he was, nevertheless, highly admired and appreciated by his wife.

The General and Miss Gunilla were both gathered to their fathers, in the firm conviction that their Hedda was one of the happiest of women. She herself never said anything to the contrary; and when afterwards her beauty developed itself to a surprising extent, and she received the homage of a multitude of admirers, who contended for the honour of a look or smile, she discovered, for the first time in her life, that there was a certain degree of pleasure in wielding such power; but she wielded it cautiously, nevertheless. In the midst of all this excitement her

heart remained untouched; and although the roses upon her cheeks bloomed more brightly than ever, yet her inner life was barren indeed.

Occasionally, some tidings of Richard, and of the active, useful life he led, would reach her ears. She could not bring herself openly to pronounce his name, but by round-about ways, she contrived now and then to obtain some details concerning him, which she treasured up in her own bosom; and her heart always beat with pleasure at the assurance that he still remained unmarried. Although herself cut off from all hope, yet in her moments of weakness it appeared to her as if she had been possessed of some small claim upon his affection; and the idea that he could *now* be unfaithful to the memory of Isabel would have been bitter indeed to her. Nothing, however, was heard which could give rise to such a fear; and years passed away without fate having again brought them together.


After four years of a childless marriage, Hedda beheld herself freed from her wearisome, although not oppressive, fetters, by the death of her husband.

So soon as she was able to think at all in her new situation, she formed the determination of leaving Stockholm, and settling at Mörkedal. She lamented her husband with that sort of decent sorrow which every well-conditioned woman must feel for the severance of such a tie; but it cannot be said that her feelings on the

occasion were very deep—still she did feel, for her husband had never embittered her life by a harsh word. It was a relief to her, however, to know that she might now, without any qualms of conscience, suffer her thoughts to follow their natural course; and its association with the past made her lonely Mörkedal dearer to her than any other spot. In parting with her other residences, however, some secret feeling induced her to retain the little villa in the Thiergarten. If she did not wish to inhabit it herself, she should find no difficulty in letting it; and at any rate it would be a good thing to have some little *pied à terre* in the neighbourhood of Stockholm.

In the autumn, Hedda returned to her dear old home at Mörkedal. The General and Aunt Gunilla had both been laid to rest, but one faithful friend cheered the solitary young widow by his company in the long winter evenings, and this friend was Captain Brandler—who had renewed his almost exhausted stock of anecdotes, and who was besides much softened and improved by daily intercourse with an amiable and cultivated woman.

The Parliament met again at the new year, and Hedda soon found mention in the newspapers of a name which she never saw without that beating of the heart which tells of such deep interest. The long debates of which in former days, when she used to read them aloud to her father, she had never understood a word, and which she then



found unutterably tedious, were now perused with the greatest attention and constituted her favourite study, to which all other reading was postponed.

As the spring advanced, she began to think that Mörkedal was not particularly well adapted for a summer residence, and that the beautiful groves of the Thiergarten would be far more attractive, and thither she accordingly returned with the summer birds.

And now, for the first time for eight years, she and Richard were within a mile of each other. But although she had thus attained her secret object, she had no thought or wish to go a step further—on the contrary, although the hidden flame burned as brightly and purely now as in her sixteenth year, yet it was combined with a degree of self-control and feminine delicacy, which restrained every impulse of former weakness, and made her even dread the possibility of an unexpected meeting.

But she would not refuse herself the pleasure of seeing him, herself unseen, and to this end she procured a ticket of admission to the gallery of the senate-house, where concealed behind some other ladies of her acquaintance she saw and heard him once more. He was no longer the handsome animated youth who had been the hero of her first dream. He was now a far handsomer distinguished looking man, and how melodious, how deep and clear were the tones of his voice!

Hedda's heart was overflowing at once with joy and pain—she rejoiced in his distinction, she shared in his feelings—she was animated by his spirit; but that lofty spirit did not seek her sympathy, and a few quiet tears found their way down her cheeks.

Hedda often indulged herself with this pleasure, but always under the shelter of her veil, and taking especial care to come away early; for each time that she saw him increased her dread of a meeting, which reminded her so strongly of her own childish weakness.

Once, however, it had very nearly occurred. It was one evening that Hedda was wandering through the aisles of the Ritterholm's church, for which, with all its historic associations, she had an admiration. She had separated herself from her party, and was contemplating the banners and trophied arms which had witnessed such glorious struggles, when she perceived an individual advancing slowly towards her. She knew him directly, but, overpowered by a sudden fear lest he too should recognise her, she turned away so as effectually to conceal her face until he had passed; but no sooner had he gone than she reproached herself severely for having behaved in so childish a manner, and for having let slip so obvious an opportunity of renewing her acquaintance with him. It would assuredly never present itself again.

It did, however, and that very soon.



A couple of days after her visit to the Church of Ritterholm, Hedda, in crossing the Blasius-holm, met quite unexpectedly an old and very dear friend, the Countess Virginie von M—. They had not met since their girlish days, and in their delight could hardly refrain from rushing into one another's arms in the open street. Virginie endeavoured to persuade Hedda to return home with her at once; but to this Hedda would not consent. Virginie therefore sent away her servant, and accompanied her friend in a boat to the Thiergarten, where, in Hedda's pretty little habitation, they spent together two very happy hours. They had much, very much to tell each other. Richard's name was often casually mentioned by Virginie, but Hedda evidently would not enter upon this topic, she felt, poor little thing, that she had not yet acquired sufficient self-command to speak of the man she loved to his own sister. Countess M— began to recall many little circumstances which, even in former days, had attracted her attention, and her lively imagination conceived certain ideas of which her friend, happily for her, had no idea.

When Hedda invited Virginie and her husband to dine with her the next day, not a word was spoken on either side concerning Richard.

We, however, know already what Virginie had taken upon herself to do; and we will now return to the little party, whom we find seated after dinner on some benches before the door.

The conversation appears animated—Hedda's eyes are bright with pleasure, and Captain E——brand's attention to his young hostess is as delicate as it is respectful; but it serves to remind her that she is no longer sixteen years old.

CHAPTER XX.

"I DO not think there can be a more beautiful spot upon earth than the Thiergarten!" said Virginie, as they looked back upon it from the bridge and saw how the moonbeams played on the clear blue expanse of the beautiful Brunnenbai, which reflected all the surrounding objects as in a mirror; while the same moonbeams illuminated the lovely face and form of Hedda as she leaned over the balustrade.

"Yes," said the Count, "the Thiergarten is certainly very beautiful, but I own I prefer the shady avenues of Drottningholm. You have not yet seen Drottningholm, Virginie. Every day hitherto has been engaged; but, let us see, when have we a free one? We might make a party there on Wednesday, if Madame von Brude would give us the pleasure of her company?"

"Oh yes," exclaimed Virginie, "that would be

delightful; you will come us, will not you, dear Hedda?"

Richard said nothing, but in the glance that he directed towards her, Hedda thought she perceived a look of friendly inquiry.

"It will give me great pleasure," she replied.

"And I see," continued Virginie, playfully, "that Richard is wishing to ask your permission to come and fetch you either on foot, on horseback, in a carriage, or by water; for you must know that he still prides himself on retaining no small portion of the politeness that was instilled into him by my late uncle."

"Virginie has anticipated my wishes," interposed Richard, turning to Hedda, with a courteous bow.

"I am afraid it would be giving you too much trouble," replied she, turning away her head in some confusion.

"Is my request rejected, then?" said Richard, not altogether in a tone of indifference. "In former days," thought he, "it would not have been thus." He ascribed Hedda's embarrassment to a wish to show him the difference that existed between then and *now*.

"Not rejected at all," said Virginie. "Hedda has only answered you as women always do when they do not choose to say either yes or no; and you, Richard, would do best to prove that you do *not* consider the trouble too great."

"I shall be delighted if it is not."

Hedda turned her blushing countenance towards him, at sight of which the unpleasant feeling vanished from his bosom, and he felt his own cheek burn. "I may come, then?" said he, joyfully; "the next question is, which of the modes of conveyance suggested by Virginie you would prefer?"

"I think we had better go by water." Hedda selected this to avoid a *tête-à-tête* on foot or in the carriage. And thus it was settled.

On the way home, Richard was more silent than usual. His companions did not appear to notice it, nor was he himself conscious of it, for his thoughts were busy recalling the garden scene in Mörkedal, which he found far more vividly impressed on his mind than he had any idea of. It now appeared to him surprising that the recollection of this engaging young creature, although never quite effaced, should yet have occupied him so little since his return to Sweden. He had barely thought of her when he heard of her marriage, and had then again dismissed her from his mind until the tidings of the death of her husband and of her return to Mörkedal reached him at the same time. Then, indeed, he thought more frequently of the sweet childish image, associated with the recollection of bygone years: but these thoughts led to nothing, for he would not visit her at Mörkedal at so early a period of her widowhood; it might have given occasion for gossip, which, on her account, it was better to avoid.

But now at length he had seen her again, and had found her singularly developed both in mind and person; for although her answers to himself had been somewhat brief, in her conversation with his brother-in-law, she had displayed no common degree of intelligence and cultivation, and although she still retained something of the sweet childish innocence which had distinguished her at sixteen, yet it was very becoming to her. She was at once the Hedda of former days, and another far more lovely and attractive; and, therefore, her image, as she had been in her early years, did not fade away in the dim light of memory, but stood forth before him in all the brilliant colours she could herself have wished.

Richard's sleep was somewhat disturbed that night. He was far from acknowledging to himself, that the renewal of his acquaintance with Hedda had made a deep impression upon him. The heart which had remained faithful for ten years, was unwilling to admit another occupant. But imagination is an active agent in such cases. He was astonished to find himself assailed by thoughts and feelings which he had deemed for ever laid to rest; and this awoke in him a sentiment of tender melancholy. He grieved to think it could be possible to forget, and shrunk from such a thought, which appeared to him almost a desecration. Still he could not banish Hedda's image from his mind.

And Hedda, did she sleep soundly?—No, it seemed as if she had awoke to a new life: and the dangerous guest of former days was once more welcomed to her bosom.

The Wednesday came; but between it and the Monday on which Hedda had received her guests, was another day on which Virginie had fetched her friend to spend the evening with her. Richard, too, had been there, and had become every moment more fascinated, for one evening of unconstrained intercourse gives ample scope for the feelings to develop themselves. The sun shone bright on Wednesday morning when Richard crossed over to the Thiergarten, and as he sat at the helm he was conscious of a feeling rather akin to self-reproach than to delight; for although he had formed no definite purpose, he perceived that she who, for so many years, had rarely entered his thoughts, had now taken entire possession of them, and that he had neither inclination nor power to resist the fascination.

It was singular, that, while reproaching himself for the eagerness with which he had acquiesced in Virginie's plan, he yet underwent the torment of impatience. It appeared to him as if the oars of the sturdy boat-women had never before moved so slowly; at length, however, they reached the bridge, Richard sprang on shore, and as Hedda's abode was close by, he had in few moments reached the glass-door of her drawing-room, in which he perceived a maid laying the table for

coffee. She put two places, and said as she left the room, "My mistress will be here immediately."


"That is well," thought Richard, "to-day she will no doubt receive me as an old friend!" and he gave his dress and person a hasty inspection at the glass.

Light as were the footsteps that approached, they struck at once upon Richard's ear. Hedda entered and greeted him with a modest welcome.

Richard advanced towards her, and with the cordial freedom of former days held out his hand, which she however touched so lightly that he withdrew it in some confusion. It was clear that the old times were gone by for ever.

"I have not yet had coffee," said she, with a slight gesture of invitation to Richard, as she herself approached the table. He took a chair and placed himself opposite to her.

While she was occupied in making the coffee, he could not refuse himself the pleasure of examining her more narrowly. Either she really looked more lovely than on the preceding days, or she appeared so to him, because he was becoming every day more fascinated. Something, too, might be attributed to the circumstance of her having laid aside the sable attire which reminded him rather of Madame von Brude, than of Hedda D——. As the mourning was nearly at an end, she had exchanged her black dress for one more



suitable to the season, of white muslin, while her black lace scarf could not conceal the whiteness of the shoulders upon which, as she bent down her head, her hair fell in rich and glossy curls. Her transparent complexion was suffused with blushes, for she was embarrassed by the close scrutiny of his eyes, which she felt upon her, although she could not see them.

"I think we must make haste."

These were the only words she uttered while the coffee was drank, and they admonished Richard to rise from his seat. Hedda vanished, but speedily re-appeared with her bonnet and shawl, accompanied by her maid with a cloak.

"So she brings a companion—a kind of *duenna*, I suppose," thought Richard. "Why should she thus avoid being alone with me? But who would have thought that little Hedda would ever become so fascinating?"

"You have been a long time coming, my good friends!" was Countess Virginie's smiling welcome to her guests.

"Are we to go by land, or by water?" asked Hedda.

"What, have you not even ascertained that? We have got our carriage, and there is my husband waiting to hand you into it. So now let us lose no more time!"

What a day was this for Hedda! It was well for her that the sun gave her a sufficient excuse for the use of both veil and parasol, as she


traversed, on Richard's arm, the beautiful avenues of Drottningholm that lead to "China."

"It is very long," said he, bending down towards her, "since I have spent a day of such unmixed enjoyment. I shall inscribe it amongst the happy ones of my life."

"After the bitter sorrow that you have endured," replied Hedda, in a tremulous voice, "it is not astonishing that your life has appeared a cheerless one."

"Yes," returned he, with difficulty mastering the emotion which, even now, was excited within him, by any allusion to this subject. "The years that followed that affliction were long and joyless indeed; but life itself, my family, and the position in which I was placed, combined to admonish me that it was incumbent upon me to struggle against my grief, in order to fulfil the duties that devolved upon me. At first, indeed, the task was a hard one; but active employment soon became agreeable to me, and it is that to which I owe the blessing of being once more able to look forward with hope."

Virginie's exclamations at the sight of "China," interrupted Richard's first confidential conversation with Hedda. The gates of this singular and successful creation of a gifted Queen were thrown open, and Virginie hastened to inspect the rooms, with a delight exceeding that caused her by any of the other pleasures she had yet tasted at Stockholm, while her husband enacted



the part of cicerone, giving her all the information she wanted, in the form of historic notices, explanations, and anecdotes of the persons who had once formed part of the social circle here assembled.

While the Count and Countess were thus agreeably occupied, Hedda, who had often been there before, and began to feel fatigued, seated herself on one of the luxurious sofas, where, in the dim twilight of the apartment, she looked, to Richard's eyes, peculiarly lovely.

"Are you already tired?" asked he. He could not bring himself to address her as Madame von Brude.

"No, not exactly tired; but we have walked a good way, and I have often been here before."

"And is it possible ever to look without interest at this marvellous little fragment of another hemisphere, that appears as if it had been transported hither by magic?"

"Oh, I do not very much care for marvels!" replied Hedda, quite confused at not knowing in her haste what cause to assign for the indifference which she had never felt before. Hitherto she had never failed to contemplate with interest the treasures here assembled.

Richard looked at her in silence for some time, while thoughts of joy and hope awoke in his heart. "I, too," said he, at length, "have often visited this place, but never yet with so much pleasure as to-day!"

Hedda raised her beautiful eyes. Whatever it might cost her she must see how he looked as he said these words. But her boldness received instant punishment, for she could not endure the glance of his eye.

He seated himself beside her; but timid as a dove, Hedda rose from her place, saying she was sure Virginie must be waiting for her.

— “Will you not grant an old friend one moment . . . Hedda,—is that kind?” asked he, suffering his eyes to express something more of tender reproach than his lips had uttered.

Her name, pronounced by his lips, and in such a tone, rang with a thrill of delight on Hedda's heart. It seemed to her as if a mist had gathered before her eyes, and scarcely could she command sufficient composure to quit the spot. But this she felt to be necessary, and with a look almost of entreaty, she withdrew her hand from his and hastened away.

His eyes followed her retreating figure. “What a faithful heart!” thought he, “but that warm and faithful heart, no longer throbs alone.”

From this hour, Richard made no attempt to conceal his wishes and feelings, although out of consideration of her modesty, which feared to have betrayed itself and to have excited his pity, he approached his point only by slow degrees. Not until she could raise her eyes to his in the firm persuasion that he loved her for herself, did he utter the momentous words.

“Oh,” replied Hedda, while the tears streamed down her cheeks, “I have nothing to say that could be new to you; so I need make you no reply.”

CHAPTER XXI.

AFTER ten years of silence, the spacious halls of Tyringsholm once more echoed to the joyous sounds of music and dancing. It was on the day that the new proprietor celebrated his arrival there with the young, lovely, and gentle bride, who was to share his home.

The roses of life now began to unfold themselves afresh in Richard's bosom. And, as drawing his Hedda's arm through his, they walked alone through the long gallery, and stopped before the portrait of a young and exquisitely beautiful woman, not represented like the rest in full dress, but enveloped in the rich folds of a crimson shawl, Richard clasped his young bride closer to his heart, and whispered, "I know, I feel, that her blessing is upon us—it is our noblest wedding gift."

Hedda's eyes filled with tears, "I can never be to you what she was!" replied she.

"Be content, my beloved Hedda, and doubt not that you are perhaps better suited to be my wife, than she whom, even in heaven, I still love with a devotion, which may well subsist side by side with another earthly love. Isabel's spirit aspired to higher things than simple quiet happiness like ours."

A smile again played on Hedda's lips. "Oh, how I wish," said she, with childish sweetness, "that my name, too, had been Isabel."

"God forbid!" interposed Richard, hastily. "I would not wish to love another woman who bore that name; I do not even think that I *could* do so. She was unlike all other women, and even her very name is sacred to me,—but now there is none that sounds sweeter in my ears than Hedda."

A few minutes after, Hedda was waltzing with her husband round the brilliantly-lighted hall even more happy than when in former days she had done so with Lieutenant Richard, and when the dance was over she hastened to seek her honoured mother-in-law, the amiable Baroness Ebba, who felt this to be one of the happiest days of her life. Her feelings were reflected in the countenance of her husband, as he occasionally tore himself from the card-table to take a turn through the ball-room and stroke the cheek of his lovely daughter-in-law.

"And have you quite forgotten me, my little lady?" said Captain Brandler, still privileged to retain his former freedom. "To punish you I ought to tell the story of the young lady who was particularly fond of mustard, and who once cried for my——"

"You have not engaged me for a single dance," interrupted Hedda, quickly, giving him a playful tap on the arm; "and as a punishment for your incivility, I shall use my authority, as hostess, to condemn you to silence."

Klas Malchus would not be persuaded to be present on the occasion. "No," wrote he to Richard, "if I should not make quite so deplorable a figure as at the time when I was so unwillingly forced to dance with your present wife, I should still be as much out of place as ever amid such festive scenes. When once, however, you have set all to rights at Tyringsholm, we shall expect you here."

And they had not long to wait.

One evening as Klas Malchus and Professor O—— were seated with outstretched legs and in the most comfortable position before a blazing fire, at which the children, kneeling around it, were roasting apples, while Mary was busied in

preparing the Professor's evening glass of grog—they were surprised by the very unusual sound of a loud ring at the door bell, and a few minutes after the party was increased by the arrival of the newly-married couple.

"I hope," said Richard, who had recovered much of his former gaiety; "that you will not disdain to give my wife a kiss. No ceremony, Baron, I beg, for you will surely not reject her a second time?"

The Baron, who in this, as well as in many other respects, was just the same as ever, turned away looking the picture of embarrassment, and suffered his "veil" to fall over his face. But when Hedda, on a sign from her husband, playfully stroked back his hair, and good-humouredly said, "You must excuse me," there was nothing for it but to let himself be kissed in token of relationship. When, however, this distressing ceremony was over, and Richard had requested the same privilege from Mary which he had granted to Klas Malchus in respect of his own wife, Klas appeared to be in the best possible spirits, and entered into conversation with a cheerful and ready cordiality, which he had never shown in former days. It was Richard's presence, and the firm conviction of his own and his cousin's happiness, that so enlivened him. And a more cheerful circle could scarcely be assembled than that which closed around the blazing hearth.

Perhaps Professor O——, although a mere spectator, was not the least happy of the party. It did his heart good to behold so sunny a picture of life, and tears of satisfaction rose to his eyes as he looked on the animated features of Klas Malchus.

"If we live to see the next meeting of Parliament," said the Baron, in an under tone, to Richard, as he filled his glass, somewhat later in the evening, "I should, were I in your place, bring forward a motion which I consider of the highest importance."

"What is it?" inquired Richard, with some curiosity; for that Klas Malchus should be interested in any political question, was something quite new.

"The abolition of entails, the unnatural sources of so much evil! If there had not been one in our family, our relative positions would have been, in many respects, very different, and we should have been spared our deepest sorrow. Would that I might live to see the day when Tyringsholm should have lost the last trace of this ill-fated privilege. When I behold these treasures around me," and he pointed to his children, "I thank God with my whole heart, that I have it in my power to divide my property amongst them. If you should one day be as rich as I am you will understand me better."

"I understand you already," replied Richard,

"Who can tell what the future may have in store for us!"

"God grant that it may be good!" added Klas Malchus. "Meanwhile, let us drink to the continuance of our domestic happiness—but away with all entails."

THE END.

